

Producing Educated Selves:
Gender, Migration and Subjectivity
on the Edge of Transnational High-Tech Labor Arbitrage

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Himabindu Timiri

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Dedication

To SriMa

Abstract

This study examines the transnational movement of high-tech labor from the perspective of techmigrant families. It highlights the issue of dependent immigrant women, spouses of guestworkers who perform high-skilled jobs in the United States. As dependents, these immigrant women are subject to a restrictive immigration status that mandates years of unemployment, while permitting limited pathways to pursue higher education.

The study poses the issue of dependent migration as a feminized construct at the intersection of the fields of gender, migration and educational studies. Data were collected through an ethnographic study of the Indian techmigrant community in and around Atlanta over a period of eighteen months. In-depth interviews with techmigrant spouses generated narratives on migration and education. The study framework accounted for the simultaneous subjection and self-making of gendered and dependent immigrant subjectivities. Using a blend of discourse and narrative analyses, a contextual reading of subject-making processes saw immigrant women as located on the edge of transnational labor arbitrage and within overlapping state, market and familial discourses.

While the narratives of dependent immigrant women showed evidence of interwoven subjection discourses, they also exemplified moments of awareness of subjection processes and the appropriation of these same discourses into self-making processes. Ultimately, in the navigation of macro institutional forces, *educated* subjectivities, also referred to as “educated selves” in this study, played a significant role in offering these immigrant women room to leverage these subject-making processes.

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Chapter 1: Dependent Migration

On a warm fall day in Atlanta, Lila and I were seated in a set of folding chairs placed in the parking spaces outside her apartment. Lila was the youngest and the last focal participant to join the study. This was our second meeting. Earlier in the afternoon, we had walked around the neighborhood, taking pictures of fall colors. As we headed back to her apartment, she said rather spontaneously, “*Akka*¹, it’s sunny outside. Let’s just do the interview out here.” She fetched a couple of folding chairs from her apartment and placed them in the parking spaces right outside. She got comfortable in her chair and asked me to relax and do the same. As we sat there recording her intense narrative about growing up in a small town in South India and her struggle to pursue higher education in the U.S., neighbors’ cars, the mailman and the janitor in his golf cart, all rolled by the parking lot. Over the duration of this study, that afternoon scene never left me. I wondered what it was about it that had persisted, and then, it dawned on me. Gated apartment communities, such as Lila’s, have strict rules for residents – who parks where, who uses common spaces for what, among an endless list of others. But there we were that afternoon, in the makeshift living room that Lila had created, making space for her telling, her story, all the while bending a couple of neighborhood rules. Lila’s spontaneous act typified the countless daily acts of space-making by dependent immigrants like herself within rigid, dominant and overlapping systems governing their lives.

¹ Tamil for “older sister.”

This study enquires into notions of being educated among so-called “dependent” immigrant women from India. Spouses of techworker immigrants from India, the women are prohibited from seeking employment after migration. The dependent status imposes a hiatus, anywhere from six years to a decade, when they cannot use their skills or education for productive or economic ends. They can, however, pursue an education or volunteer during this period. So what do Indian immigrant women make of this dependent status? How do they negotiate their dual status – of being included and excluded from the knowledge economy²? The study was conducted in Atlanta, a growing immigration hub that welcomes significant and growing numbers of Indian immigrants (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). The introductory chapter offers an overview of the immigrant population discussed in this study – techworkers and their families, the rationale for the study, research questions, conceptual framework, as well as my positionality as a researcher with regard to the issue of dependent migration.

The Indian Diaspora

According to a United Nations report on international migration, at 15.6 million, India has the largest population of migrants from a single country, with migrants being defined as those born in the country but living outside (The United Nations, 2016). India is also the largest remittance receiving country gaining \$72 billion in 2015 (The World Bank, 2015). Moreover, the greatest number of tertiary-educated migrants are found to come from India. The U.S. is the second most favored destination for Indians and attracts

² “Knowledge economy” here refers to the non-manufacturing sectors of the global economy where knowledge/education replaces material production as the key economic driver (Walby et al., 2007). Guest workers from diverse Asian countries perform specialized jobs predominantly in the American information technology sector.

the most number of Indian women immigrants (The United Nations, 2016). Many of these Indian migrants also seek pathways to citizenship in their adopted countries with only a fraction choosing to return to India (Kapur, 2010).

There is no greater testimony to the political significance of the Indian diaspora than the rise to power of India's right-leaning party and the current Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Studies analyzing Modi's journey to New Delhi from a controversial and legally-embroiled stint as the chief minister of the western Indian state of Gujarat, have pointed to his popularity among the Indian diaspora (Biswas, 2010). The diaspora contributed with steady support and funds for Modi's 2014 election (Chakravartty & Roy, 2015). The growing attendance at the "Day for Indians Abroad" or *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas* held each year since 2003 in a different Indian city, is further evidence of the reciprocal relationship between India and its diaspora. Mani and Varadarajan (2005) suggest that the connection between India and her diaspora, as figured during and since this annual celebration, signals a clear departure from the prior policy of non-engagement of the state with its diaspora. They suggest too that the connection was strengthened after India's economic reforms and subsequent newfound ambition of the Indian state to play a greater role on the world stage.

India and its Tech Labor

Since the opening of Indian markets to foreign investors in 1991 and consequent economic boom in the Indian information technology (IT) industry, developing skilled human resources for the tech industry has gained economic and political significance in the country (Kapur, 2002). Indian cities like Bangalore and Pune compete to attract

greater numbers of IT employers and the skilled resources for this industry. Middle-class Indian households around the country also aim to have at least one software-engineer son or daughter who can participate in this knowledge economy.

An important aspect of the premium placed on IT employment in India is the potential for migration through IT work to one of the outsourcing countries. Nearly ten percent of the country's gross domestic product comes from outsourcing revenues and the sector creates 3.7 million jobs in India and abroad (Make in India, 2017). These outsourcing services involve not just moving corporate operations and work from developed countries to India, but also quite frequently, bringing IT workers from India to the U.S. to complete "on-site" work. As a result, currently, techworkers from India are the largest number of "guest workers" in the American IT sector (Department of Homeland Security [DHS], 2014).

The Highly Skilled and the Dependent

Over the past three decades, and most recently during the 2016 U.S. Presidential elections, there has been sustained public debate in the U.S. surrounding outsourcing and the importing of skilled human resources from countries such as India into the American hi-tech industry (North, 1996; Wadhwa, 2012). Arguments put forth by both sides of this debate run the gamut of metaphors, suggesting on one end that bringing in high-skilled labor makes the U.S. a "magnet for global talent," and on the other end, characterizing these foreign guest workers as "indentured servants" from "body shops" (Banerjee, 2006; Chakravartty, 2005; Hira & Hira, 2005; Lowell & Salzman, 2007). Silicon Valley executives and lead scientists in the country argue that there is a shortage of qualified

local talent in science, technology and engineering fields, and that these jobs go vacant, unless filled by talented future immigrants from countries like India and China (Broache, 2008; Luftman, Kempaiah, & Bullen, 2008; Wadhwa, 2009; 2012). Their case is built on maintaining the country's dual competitiveness – in the global hi-tech market, and in the global immigration market for the best brains from the developing world. Meanwhile, economists and politicians argue that guest workers displace citizens from their jobs (Hira, 2008; Hira & Hira, 2005; Matloff, 2003; North, 1996). This viewpoint suggests that the shortage of native talent is a false argument, since Silicon Valley in particular does not raise wages to match the local availability of labor (Matloff, 2003).

Notwithstanding these political arguments, corporate interests have largely prevailed in shaping immigration regulations. In 1990, the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act was modified to create a visa category called the “H-1B visa” (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services [USCIS], 2013). Among a range of employment-based visas that permit non-U.S. citizens to enter, reside and work in the country, the H-1B is a temporary worker visa for highly specialized jobs in the IT, engineering and medical sectors (USCIS, 2013). Each year, more than half of the H-1B population comes from India (Department of Homeland Security [DHS], 2014). Though gender disaggregated data are unavailable, estimates show that H-1B workers are mostly male, particularly from India (Center for Comparative Immigration Studies [CCIS], 2000; Parker, 2013).

In 2000, the “American Competitiveness in the Twenty-First Century Act” passed major modifications to the H-1B program, making it easier for H-1B visa holders to stay

longer in the country and access pathways to permanent residency (American Competitiveness in the Twenty-First Century Act of 2000, 2000). Spouses and family of H-1B workers were henceforth allowed to reside in the U.S. on the H-4 visa or the “dependent immigrant” visa (USCIS, 2013). While H-1B workers may elicit scholarly interest as international labor (Chakravartty, 2005; Cornelius, Espenshade, & Salehyan, 2001; Hira & Hira, 2005), their families, the H-4 visa holders, remain a black box for immigration studies (Balgamwalla, 2014). Indeed, each year, more than 30,000³ women migrate from India to the U.S. with their H-1B spouses. Yet, the women themselves are largely unwelcome: unlike their spouses, they cannot work on arrival and can only reside in the U.S. on a “dependent” immigration status, the ramifications of which are examined in the section below. In brief, despite skills to be productive citizens of the global economy, these immigrant women are accorded a legally dependent status that prevents employment and makes them socially and economically dependent on their partners. So, their experiences run counter to a linear narrative about the uniform benefits of better education and subsequent migration for women.

In this regard, the H1-B/H-4 visa system paints a mixed picture of U.S. immigration policy. On the one hand, the visa program is one among many techniques of a neoliberal state that stretches itself to further the interests of its markets (Harvey, 2007a), in this case by importing globally available high-skilled labor. On the other hand,

³ This is an estimate of the number of dependent Indian immigrant women, since there exists no demographic breakdown of the population from official sources. Indian men form the majority of the annual population of 85,000 H-1B workers. So their “trailing spouses” are estimated at less than half the number each year, excluding dependents from other countries or dependent children (Balgamwalla, 2014; DHS, 2014).

the state, through this program, appears to uphold values of equality and justice with minimal social provision for the families of these future immigrants, allowing them to study or volunteer. In a gesture symbolic of these dual undertones, the 2014 Presidential executive action⁴ allowed a limited number of dependent immigrant spouses to apply for work permits (USCIS, 2014). The wording of this amendment to immigration regulation echoes concerns about the country's competitiveness in retaining the best and the brightest globally. But, it also argues that "the socio-economic benefits [of work permits for spouses] will assist the family in more easily integrating into American society" (USCIS, 2014). Reaction to the executive action from the dependent immigrant community has been one of muted celebration (Duttagupta, 2014). Many of these women have to explain a decade-long hiatus from work; others, such as the approximately 30,000 women entering the U.S. every year as dependents, still face an uncertain period of unemployment, between six years to a decade, until they qualify for the new regulations. At the time of writing this dissertation, this minor amendment to immigration policy was undergoing a legal review and facing potential repeal under the new administration (Rajan, 2017).

Feminized Dependence and Educated Subjects

In immigration law, the dependent immigrant status is essentially a newer version of an antiquated legal notion known as "coverture" (Balgamwalla, 2014). "Coverture"

⁴ This executive action on immigration passed by President Obama on November 21, 2014 (USCIS, 2014) authorized the issue of work permits for a limited number of dependent immigrant spouses, provided they are close to transitioning to a permanent resident status. The reform still excludes significant numbers of dependent immigrants who do not meet these criteria, including all 30,000 newly arriving dependent immigrants each year.

binds the legal identity of women to their husbands on marriage, whereafter, in the eyes of the law, women exist only as dependent subjects of their husbands. Under coverture, married women cannot function as independent citizen-subjects which includes socio-legal aspects such as property ownership and financial independence. In the case of dependent immigrant women, coverture translates to not being accorded a social security number. This leads to difficulties opening bank accounts and credit cards, obtaining a phone connection, and in some states, obtaining a driver's license. Balamwala (2014) notes that whereas feminist protests helped repeal the coverture law for U.S. citizens, the law continues to be applied in its antiquated form to derivative immigrant categories, such as the H-4 visa. Since coverture means that dependent immigrant women are not acknowledged as independent legal subjects, they consequently face deportation in case of a divorce.

Indeed, in the socio-political context of the U.S., the word "dependent" in itself sets off a series of associations, epitomized by the stigma of welfare dependency. In this regard, Fraser and Gordon (1994) draw a nuanced analysis of the gendered nature of social policy in the U.S. They suggest that in the context of the U.S., dependence connotes alike the economically dependent housewife as the welfare-dependent mother. They examine various registers of the term "dependency" within the history of U.S. social policy and argue that race, class and gender dictate meanings of social dependency in this context. One such register for the term is the individual responsabilization register where, "fear of dependency, both explicit and implicit, posits an ideal, independent personality in contrast to which those considered dependent are deviant" (p. 332).

Similar to Fraser and Gordon (1994), in her analysis of high-skilled labor outsourcing, Ong (2006) argues that the ideal citizen-subject is seen in the U.S. context as a self-made, independent, masculine subject:

To be American is to be self-reliant, self-improving, and technologically savvy, qualities that ensure access to college education and a comfortable middle-class life, with all its accoutrements.... Furthermore, the status of middle-class Americans has been tied to their claims as territorialized citizens, “good” subjects who do not make claims on welfare like less-educated Americans, but only make claims on jobs sheltered from the buffeting of capitalism. (p. 159)

These evaluations of a social system that is characterized by the feminization of dependence in turn raise the question, what is the place of dependent Indian immigrant women here? Could they make claims at being middle-class Americans⁵, as described by Ong, but for the legal bind of the dependent immigration status?

In the midst of a tenuous and feminized dependent condition, education, and specifically, being educated and mobile subjects in the global economy, characterize the lives of dependent immigrant women from India. A majority of them possess tertiary education from India, many in technology and engineering fields, but also in a range of other fields such as accounting and advertising (O’Brien, 2014; Prasad, 2014; Shah, 2013). As a result, questions about being educated, middle-class subjects are amplified for them. They are thus part of a globally mobile labor force, albeit as indirect participants for the moment.

⁵ This usage of “American” mirrors the usage of the term among the Indian diaspora in relation to being “Indian” and/or “immigrant.”

Research Questions

The research questions for the study sought to identify the dual aspects of being made and self-making for dependent immigrant subjects. These subject-making processes are explained in the following section. An overarching research question was proposed with two parts:

How are “educated and dependent” subjectivities made for and by dependent immigrant women from India within a state-market-family apparatus?

- How does the dependent immigrant status construct women from India as “educated” and “dependent” at once?
- What specific strategies do dependent Indian immigrant women deploy to position themselves as “educated” subjects?

The dependent immigrant status is seen here as a technique of governmentality that produces these women as “educated-but-dependent” subjects. At the same time, the women are active in their self-making processes as “educated” subjects, within and against the apparatus of dependence.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study draws on the concepts of *governmentality* and *subject-ification*, as critiqued by McNay (2000; 2013) from Foucault’s later work (1976/1978), and as used in anthropological studies of migration (Ong, 2006; Ong et al., 1996; McDowell, 2008). Governmentality, drawn from Foucault’s theory about the apparatus of government control (1976/1978; 1980), helps explore the processes by which the lives of dependent immigrants are regulated by

government institutions and the immigration apparatus (enforced by withholding social security numbers, driver's licenses, bank accounts, educational loans, among other mechanisms). Subject-ification (Ong et al., 1996) refers to the dual processes of being made (subjection) and self-making (subjectivity) as subjects within these apparatuses of government regulation. Using a feminist approach to these processes, McNay (2000) calls for greater attention to the creative agency of gendered subjects in relation to dominant subjection discourses. For dependent Indian immigrant women, this translates to understanding how they may creatively self-fashion as *educated* subjects within the governmentality of their immigration status.

Gendered subjects. Feminist scholars such as Butler (1990/1999), de Lauretis (1987), Ginsburg and Tsing (1992) and McNay (2000) have argued that it is an innately resistant strategy to conceptualize gender as multiply positioned. As de Lauretis (1987) states, "A feminist theory of gender ... points to a conception of the subject as multiple, rather than divided or unified, and as excessive or heteronomous vis-à-vis the state ideological apparatus and the sociocultural technologies of gender" (p. 10). In other words, embracing multiple conceptions of the gendered self, as opposed to an unfragmented self, offers women a means to resist and negotiate their position of powerlessness in the eyes of the nation-state and within the wider social system. On the same note, scholars suggest that feminist solidarities are universalizing as they seek to gloss over differences between women (Butler, 1990/1999; hooks, 2000; Mohanty, 1988; Spivak, 1988).

Because each individual is situated in a complex relationship with the privileges and constraints of gender, class, race, ethnic, and sexual hierarchies, individual subjectivity – how the self is constituted and experienced – is also a site of contradictions.... An individual's position in a web of intersecting inequalities has too often been interpreted, and experienced, as paralyzing; yet an awareness of this complexity can also be politically empowering as it suggests new modes of self-respect and alliance. (Ginsberg & Tsing, 1992, p. 8)

These ideas of shifting gendered subjectivities are a direct result of demands from women of color and feminists around the world to consider varying contexts and systems of oppression for diverse groups of women (hooks, 2000; Mohanty, 1988). They reflect as well the influence that poststructuralist theories have had on feminist thinking. A poststructuralist understanding of gender draws on the notion of discursive subjectivity (Butler, 1990/1999; Foucault, 1976/1978), which proposes that gendered subject positions or gendered subjectivities emerge through discourse.

Hall (1992) describes Foucault's notion of discourse as "the production of knowledge through language" (p. 165). According to Foucault, "We should admit that power produces knowledge...that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute...power relations" (as cited in Hall, 1992, p. 167). Poststructuralist feminist theorists have adapted this power/knowledge and discourse linkage to devise a performative understanding of gender, instead of assuming gender as an essence deriving from an individual's

biology/sex (Butler, 1990/1999). Accordingly, this performative gender refers to the iterative enactment of gendered behavior that eventually makes gendered identity appear congealed or fixed.

Overall, feminist scholars hold that the non-foundational nature of poststructuralist concepts of subjectivity allows for a feminist analytic that is free of the encumbrances of other approaches, particularly with regard to preconceptions about gender. As St. Pierre (2000) notes with regard to the application of poststructural feminist notions in educational research:

The understanding that knowledge and truth are not “pure” but unstable and contingent is very attractive to feminists who do the analytical work of documenting how discourses and operations of power have produced certain knowledge and truth about women that have become “natural” and self-evident – that women are weak, irrational, incapable of rigorous scholarship or effective leadership, etc. This commonsense knowledge has not been scientifically discovered but produced for particular reasons from particular positions of power. (p. 499)

This discursive understanding of the “gendered subject” undergirds this study of dependent Indian immigrant women, seen as being produced as feminized, dependent subjects by and within dominant systems of power. Specifically, two concepts on power relations are particularly useful for this study: *governmentality* and *subject-ification*.

Governmentality and subject-ification. Ong et al. (1996) have drawn from Foucault’s notions of *subject-ification* and *governmentality* to illustrate how both state

and non-state institutions continually shape immigrant subjects, even as immigrants comply with and/or resist these forces. *Subject-ification* implies “self-making and being made by power relations that produce consent through schemes of surveillance, discipline, control, and administration” (p. 737). In particular, it refers to the constitution of the subject through the interaction of both *techniques of domination* (being made) and *techniques of the self* (self-making)⁶ (Foucault, 1980; McNay, 2013). Ong et al. argue that the subject-ification of immigrant subjects occurs through the disciplining action of the regulatory regimes of the state and certain non-state powers, also known as *governmentality*. Further, McNay (2013) explains that Foucault uses this notion of governmental regulation:

to explain how the modern state is not a unified apparatus of domination, but is made up of a network of institutions and procedures which employ complex techniques of power to order social relations. The aim of governmentality is not the imposition of laws, but the regulation of the population through various techniques, such as the stimulation of the birthrate or the improvement of the health and longevity of the population. . . . Like disciplinary power, governmentality also targets the individual as means with which to maintain social control. (p. 68)

⁶ Foucault (1980) describes *techniques of domination/coercion* as practices through which one imposes one’s will on individuals to make them do something, and *techniques/technologies of the self* where individuals effect certain operations on themselves (or with the help of other people) to transform themselves.

From this understanding of subject-ification operating through governmentality, Ong et al. (1996) debate how, in everyday interactions with the disciplining powers of the state, civil society and global capital, immigrant subjects participate in the construction of race, ethnicity and gender relations. For instance, among Cambodian immigrant families in California, Ong et al. illustrate how unequal gender relations were seen as oppressive and patriarchal by feminist social workers. However, Khmer women were able to use these domestic disputes to access certain welfare services, which in turn contributed to their racialization within the welfare system. In this manner, immigrant subjects are not only governed by state power but also use these same mechanisms, alternately resisting and complying with them, and contribute to defining their immigrant selves. A similar argument may be advanced in the case of dependent Indian immigrant women: the mechanism of the dependent immigrant status can be seen as a form of governmentality that produces gendered dependence by withholding social security numbers, through unemployment and subsequent socio-economic dependence on their partners. But, much like other gendered immigrant subjects, dependent immigrant women are also agentic within these subject-ification processes, a line of analysis this study explores through their self-making as dependent but *educated* subjects.

State-market-family apparatus. Precarity marks the condition of dependent immigrant women. On entering the U.S. as dependents, their claim to being *educated* is challenged by state and global market-sponsored unemployment. Likewise, their claim to being “immigrants” is tenuously attached to their marital status, whereby divorce means deportation. So, it can be argued that as gendered immigrant subjects, they are governed

by the apparatus of the “dependent immigrant” status that operates through limiting their public participation as productive economic citizen-subjects (Fraser & Gordon, 1994; Ong, 2006). At the same time, these immigrant women from India navigate norms and gender relations specific to the context of an Indian middle-class diasporic family located within the global economy. Many of them, for instance, speak of a need to be as productive as their spouses, alongside the simultaneous pressure of not living apart after marriage (O’Brien, 2014; Shah, 2013). This web of factors that construct and condition “dependence” for Indian immigrant women is referred to as the “state-market-family apparatus” in this study. The usage of the term is meant to signify that no single factor, such as the state, market or marriage alone, contributes to their feminized and dependent condition, but rather a web of factors produce these “dependent immigrant” subjects. “Apparatus” in this context refers to the governmentality of the “network of institutions and procedures” (McNay, 2013, p. 68) that operates in the lives of dependent immigrant women.

Structure and agency. Despite analytic purchase among feminist scholars, purely poststructuralist approaches have been critiqued by some feminists for the apparent introversion of the poststructuralist subject and a privileging of the discursive, read linguistic, analyses over political action and social transformation (McNay, 1999; 2013; St Pierre, 2000). McNay (2013) mounts a nuanced critique of Foucault’s work and influence on feminist thinking. McNay admits that social theory is largely skewed towards the structure side of the structure/agency debate, and hence, poststructuralist theories offer an agential conception of the gendered subject. Techniques of the self and

governmentality together offer a positive agential conceptualization of power for women.

In fact, as McNay points out, Foucault proposes that power relations can only exist between free individuals, since the exercise of power requires resistance rather than a docile subject:

In the idea of governmentality, I am aiming at the totality of practices, by which one can constitute, define, organize, instrumentalize the strategies which individuals in their liberty can have in regard to each other. It is free individuals who try to control, to determine, to delimit the liberty of others and, in order to do that, they dispose of certain instruments to govern others. That rests indeed on freedom, on the relationship of self to self and the relationship to the other.

(Foucault as cited in McNay, 2013, p. 68)

Besides governmentality, the notion of techniques of the self or self-making techniques underscores as well an agential understanding of the subject. McNay finds that the Foucauldian notion of techniques of the self in particular, resonates with the demands of feminists of color to consider the multiplicity of differences that structure women's oppression, instead of a singular focus on sexual difference alone. Therefore, self-making techniques locate the gendered subject in varying power relations of race, class and culture that call for diverse responses from women, as will be seen here in the case of dependent Indian immigrant women.

To summarize, the conceptual framework for this study brings together the agential and material aspects of the experiences of dependent immigrant women. It not only accounts for the governmentality of the dependent immigrant status, but also takes

into account immigrant women's creative self-making processes within complex subjectification processes.

Key Terms

This study draws on specific definitions of education and gender. First, being *educated* is framed for dependent immigrant women by their membership in the global knowledge economy and their exclusion from it by their current immigration status. The notion of the *educated self* is thus derived in this study from Foucauldian subjectification and refers to their self-making strategies as *educated* subjects in a context where education is a “social technology of power” (Ong, 2006, p. 139). Ong describes the two-fold nature of education: moral education that shapes the ideal citizen-subject for a democratic state, and technical education that shapes the neoliberal global knowledge worker: “In modern societies, education is a technology of power involved in the construction of modern ethics and knowledges, the beliefs, attitudes, and skills that shape new kinds of knowledgeable subjects” (p. 139). This study considers education as “an appropriate means to an end” (p. 139), and examines how dependent immigrant women position their technical education vis-à-vis the moral notion of the *educated* citizen-subject. In other words, it considers how their *educated selves* may help position them as productive future citizen-subjects, despite their contradictory status as dependent immigrants.

Next, many of the scholars whose work frames this study (reviewed in chapter two), speak from a feminist stance towards gender. A conception of gender as “a verb” in comparison to gender as “an adjective” is in operation throughout this literature

(Unterhalter, 2005). As McDowell (2008) clarifies regarding immigrant women's experiences:

Gender is not something possessed but rather a problematic practice continually created and recreated through everyday social and cultural practices; it is dynamic and constructed through a series of repetitive performances that produce the illusion of a fixed, natural or 'proper' (heterosexual) gender. (p. 497)

This study acknowledges the problematic nature of gendered identities and examines the multiple ways in which dependent immigrant women negotiate social and cultural gender practices in their everyday lives.

Study Significance

The study advances research on the diverse conceptions of education among immigrant groups (Hall, 2002; Villenas, 2001). It takes an anthropological approach to education that draws a distinction between education and schooling, and highlights cultural constructions of the *educated* person in diverse contexts (Levinson & Holland, 1996):

Anthropologists recognize all societies as providing some kind of training and some set of criteria by which members can be identified as more, or less, knowledgeable. Distinct societies, as well as ethnic groups and microcultures within those societies, elaborate the cultural practices by which particular sets of skills, knowledges, and discourses come to define the fully "educated" person. (p. 2)

For instance, from this approach, scholars have advanced conceptions of education in the Latina/Chicana community (Bernal, 2001; Elenes, 2001; Villenas, 2001). They explore how “hegemonic definitions of the educated person may be contested along lines of gender, age, and, in stratified societies, ethnicity and class” (Levinson & Holland, 1996, p. 2). Models for the present study include primarily ethnographic studies, such as Hall’s (2002) study of the British Sikh population and Villenas’ (2001) study of Latina immigrant mothers in North Carolina.

From this anthropological perspective, an analysis of some of its gendered educational subjectivities holds promise for the Indian American diasporic community. In effect, the study overlays the cultural notion of being *educated* for a group of social actors in a global economy where, “‘knowledge’ takes over from ‘production’ as the key driver and basis of economic prosperity” (Dale, 2005, p. 146). Not only do highly specialized skills and education define the presence of high-skilled Indian immigrants in the U.S., they also define India as a global outsourcing center (Chakravartty, 2006). As Kamat, Mir and Mathew (2004) suggest, migration of Indians into the hi-tech industry in the U.S. has led to simultaneous changes in educational policies in India. Their analysis, however, does not consider how these policy changes may be appropriated by the diasporic Indian population, an aspect that this study proposes to examine. Further, the study advances the deconstruction of the “model minority” myth (Lee, 1996) that subsumes this community within broader constructions of “Asian American” or “South Asian” (Kurien, 1999; Purkayastha, 2005). Furthermore, recent growth in the immigrant population in the Atlanta area and its southern location, makes it a relatively unexplored

site for research on immigrant groups, unlike the metro hubs that are generally the focus of immigration research (Villenas, 2001).

Lastly, thus far, studies specific to dependent Indian immigrant women present them as vulnerable through their legal status and as victims within a patriarchal socio-legal system (Abraham, 2000; Balgamwalla, 2014; Kelkar, 2012). In contrast, the critical feminist framework to this study considers creative agency along with the material and social realities of dependent Indian immigrant women, which contribute a multilayered analysis of their condition as gendered immigrant subjects.

Positionality

All qualitative research entails a set of validity threats and challenges (Maxwell, 1992). One of these tests lies in acknowledging one's assumptions and beliefs as a researcher. Feminist scholars also advocate deep reflexivity on the part of the researcher (Mani, 1990; Mohanty, 1988; Pillow, 2003). I attempt here (and in chapter three) not a simple confessional, but a reflexivity of discomfort that is ongoing and open to self-critique and other alternative readings.

I arrived in the U.S. in 2008 on a dependent immigrant status with my partner, an Indian immigrant research scientist, whose H-1B work took us to rural Georgia. I remained on the H-4 status for a year before transitioning to permanent residency. This insider knowledge of dependent migration definitely animates my claims about the problematic nature of "dependence." The "dead ends" that I experienced seeking to further my career while on this visa status, first gave me an inkling of the injustice written into the H-1B/H-4 policy. But, I understand that privilege is etched into my

hypothesis – that middle-class immigrant women are somehow disadvantaged by not being allowed access to venues of productivity. I have endeavored to recognize this class privilege in participants’ and my own experiences. The research questions further betray my own bias or faith that being *educated* can help immigrant women overcome larger socio-cultural constraints. Therefore, throughout the study, I sought to be vigilant to participants’ alternative views on education. Indeed, many of their views did run counter to my own, but I have attempted to recognize and record them in the study.

Chapter Summary

Indian immigrant women arrive in the U.S. on a restrictive legal status that leads to a period of unemployment, despite their former education and work skills. This period of deemed socio-economic dependence can be seen as a feminizing condition. It shapes them as gendered and dependent immigrant subjects. In this scenario, their awareness of being *educated* subjects could offer an understanding of the subject-making processes in operation for them within the governmentality of the dependent immigrant status. This approach is significant in that it explores education in the context of the global knowledge economy, particularly for a privileged group of social actors such as the Indian middle-class diaspora, but through the marginalized lens of some of its gendered subjectivities.

Chapter 2: Gender, Migration and Education

Pieces to the Puzzle

There are essentially three pieces to the issue of dependent migration – gender, migration and education. The absence of one of these pieces would lead to an incomplete understanding of the experiences of dependent and gendered migration of techworker spouses. Fundamental to the issue is migration in the context of the global flow of labor – dependent immigrants are here because their spouses are brought here as tech labor. Gender, as it is constructed and performed within this community, is central as well to the issue since the majority of dependent immigrants are women from India, and “dependent” in and of itself is a feminized social construct. But the puzzle would be incomplete with just the migration and gender pieces, if the fact that these immigrant women are “educated” were left out of the picture.

The techworker community is defined by its education – the skills of techworkers form the basis of their presence here. Located within this community, dependent immigrant women, much like their partners, possess varying levels of higher education – bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral. So the identity of an *educated* immigrant inheres as much to them as to their high-skilled partners. But then, what of this *educated* identity in the absence of potential venues to express it or to work towards a secure future? It is therefore essential to consider all three pieces of the dependent migration puzzle. This necessitates a review of literature that draws on multiple fields of study – globalization research, migration research and anthropological studies – and pays attention to the gender focus of studies within these research areas.

In this chapter, I have examined and organized scholarship by the increasing level of importance accorded to the immigrant subject and her agency. In the sections below, first, I will consider work by scholars who study the experiences of immigrant women within the global economy (Lowe, 1997; Meyer, 2000; Sassen, 1998). They mostly focus on the exploitation of low-skilled workers and not on the education and skills of immigrant women. Still, their neo-Marxist reading of global capitalism is useful to position dependent immigrant women within the global economy. Then, I examine two allied fields related to immigrant identities – transnational and translocal studies. Studies in this group delve into individual and collective experiences of immigrants within and across national borders (Brickell and Datta, 2011; Schiller, Basch, & Blanc, 1995). While these studies have inadequately addressed questions of gender and education, they still offer the notion of translocal subjectivities that proves useful for this study (Conradson & McKay, 2007; Mahler & Pessar, 2001). Then, I survey a third group of scholars in the field of migration research. They take a meso-level approach to intersectional gender inequalities faced by immigrant women (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992; Le Espiritu, 1999; Man, 2004; Meares, 2010). This scholarship focuses on institutional factors and reform that can address the inequalities experienced by immigrant women. Finally, I locate this study of dependent immigrant women in scholarship that captures the multiple intersections of gender, migration and education from a subjectivities-based approach (Mahler & Pessar, 2001; McDowell, 2008; Ong, 1993). These scholars discuss education as being integral to self-making processes for immigrant women.

Global Capital and Labor

The global movement of labor is central to the question of dependent Indian immigrant women: they migrate from India to the U.S. with partners who are essentially brought in as labor for the global high-tech economy. While not directly employed in the global economy, many dependent immigrant women were either formerly working or are currently aspiring to participate in it. The broadest group of studies that deals with the movement of global capital and labor focuses on the political economy of globalization and neoliberalism. The macro view of these studies enables a broad-sweeping understanding of the movement of capital, labor and resources in a globalized world, dominated by the hegemony of neoliberalism (Harvey, 2007b).

Harvey's (2007a) influential work is typical of this body of research as it spans geopolitics, macroeconomic forces, intra and international factors, all of which contributed to the current domination of the neoliberal "template." Harvey examines the global, albeit uneven, spread of neoliberalism, a political economic system that advocates free markets and minimal state intervention, justified through the rationale of individual freedom. This "template" enabled the redistribution of wealth and resources from the periphery to the ruling elites within each country and around the world. A global apparatus of power that operates through military might and international bodies, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, further ensures "accumulation by dispossession" and then displacement under neoliberalism (Harvey, 2003). Harvey posits that localized social movements ought to claim political space by naming neoliberalism for what it is – the quest to establish ruling class power. Class struggle upheld by a call to

democratic ideals can effectively, both locally and collectively, oppose the hegemony of the neoliberal system.

Harvey's (2007a; 2007b) neo-Marxist critique is echoed by numerous other scholars who similarly focus on globalization and decry the spread of neoliberalism. In research on the global migration of women, a large volume of work centers on the post-globalization exploitation of women's labor in global export industries, through domestic labor and care work (Kofman & Raghuram, 2009; Lowe, 1997; Lutz, 2012; Meyer, 2000; Sassen, 1998). These scholars write from a neo-Marxist perspective that draws on Marxist theories of materialist capital and labor relations, combined with feminist theories of patriarchy and the exploitation of women's productive/reproductive labor. In lieu of Marxist concerns over the control of productive labor by the capitalist class, these studies seek to highlight the exploitation of female migrant labor by global capitalist forces. Accordingly, these scholars describe a feminization of the proletariat, meaning that global capital increasingly draws its working class from low-skilled female labor (Sassen, 1998; Ward, 1991). This female working class is kept unorganized and underpaid to serve the interests of productivity in the global economy.

While these studies mostly discuss workers in the global export industry or domestic and care workers, there are important parallels to the condition of dependent immigrant women. H-1B workers are often framed as the *coolies* of the global knowledge economy, with reference to the underpaid and "indentured labor" conditions of their employment via hi-tech "body shops" (Chakravartty, 2006). From this perspective, it is possible to conceive dependent Indian immigrant women as cogs in the wheel of the

global capitalist machinery. Hence, their dependent immigrant status can be seen as a by-product of the labor needs of the global capitalist patriarchal machinery.

In keeping with the focus on the marginalized condition of workers, some scholars also reflect concerns from dependency theory (Cardoso, 1977; Willis, 2011). They argue that in the aftermath of structural adjustment programs, women in the developing world were forced to become low-skilled labor in export industries (Lowe, 1997; Sassen, 1998). The domino effect of neoliberal economic policies, government debt, rising male unemployment, and diminishing welfare, led to migrant women being forced into both productive and reproductive/domestic work. Meanwhile, global capital, in the form of large transnational corporations, exercises non-responsibility with regard to workers, particularly unorganized female migrant and immigrant labor (Acker, 2004). Globalization is thus characterized as hyper-masculine and promoting aggressive profit-making with widespread disregard for worker welfare (Acker, 2004).

Significantly, Sassen (2002) characterizes this hyper-masculine story of globalization as the “dominant narrative” of the global knowledge economy and counts highly educated women immigrants as part of this mainstream version of globalization. This has important ramifications for dependent immigrant women. Sassen argues that highly educated immigrants are privileged within globalization as their incomes rise with greater specialization, unlike for low-skilled laborers, many of whom do not complete secondary education. Sassen’s assessment places the H-1B/H4 population among the privileged classes of global capitalism. But she also suggests that the needs of the global

market govern the demand for both high-skilled and low-skilled labor, which makes both groups susceptible, though to differing degrees, to the vagaries of globalization.

In sum, given the exploitative global conditions for the new female proletariat, these scholars maintain the need for international labor conventions to ensure worker rights, driven by the mobilization of immigrant women workers (Lowe, 1997; Sassen, 1998). By considering the condition of women, the studies in this group overcome the class and masculine bias of a classical Marxist approach. Yet, they leave unexplored other elements of social identity, such as race or ethnicity and their intersections with class and gender. The emphasis remains on the structurally determinist forces of global capitalist patriarchy, which reduces immigrant women's identity to purely exploited labor within capitalist patriarchy (Hartmann, 1979). In general, their stance on education too emerges only as a corollary to worker wellbeing or emancipation. In lieu of an emphasis on education, these scholars tend to draw attention to the diminishing welfare state ensuing globalization and worldwide neoliberal policies that have had adverse consequences for working-class women (Acker, 2004; Sassen, 2002). They also reiterate the importance of women's organizations and their potential for educating and transforming conditions for women.

In a critique of the local/global binary that overlaps feminine/masculine within studies of globalization, Freeman (2001) argues that gender ought to be seen as interwoven with both local and global processes. Though macro and micro processes are mutually constitutive in globalization, they tend to be studied separately – the former seen as the domain of globalization and the latter as that of a feminist approach to

globalization. There is a need to challenge this macrostructural model of globalization because women are not merely victims of aggressive globalization but are also actively shaping its socio-economic and cultural processes. In line with Freeman's critique of this approach to global capital and labor, this study seeks to locate dependent immigrant women not as mere victims of macro forces under globalization, but as active and creative agents located in the midst of these forces.

The Transnational and the Translocal

Shifting focus from global forces to individuals and communities in an ever-changing world, transnational studies seek to emphasize the continued importance of nation-states in immigrant lives that are marked by a fluid sense of belonging.

Transnational scholars write against the world systems approach to a globalized world without borders (Schiller et al., 1995). Indeed, an important premise of transnationalism studies is the participation of transmigrants in nation-building projects. So the identities of transmigrants are said to be shaped by the hegemony of nation-states, even as they participate in processes of self-making (Basch et al., 2005).

Transnationalism scholars argue that immigrants may alternately accommodate or resist nationalist hegemonic forces in a continual process of negotiating multiple identities in their daily lives (Basch et al., 2005; Faist, 1998; Kearney, 1995; Schiller et al., 1995). Accordingly, the transnational framework calls for a reconceptualization of immigrant identities through global economic and political power relations:

A focus on transnationalism as a new field of social relations will allow us to explore transnational fields of action and meaning as operating within and

between continuing nation-states and as a reaction to the conditions and terms nation-states impose on their populations. Migrants will be viewed as culturally creative but as actors in an arena that they do not control. Transnational flows of material objects and ideas will be analyzed in relation to their social location and utilization – in relation to the people involved with them. (Schiller et al., 1995, p. 19)

Though transmigrants are seen as more agentic than the exploited labor of globalization, they are still largely subject to forces beyond their control. However, the everyday social practices of immigrants are central to studies in this group. The analytical framework of transnationalism captures the social life of immigrants as rooted in multiple nation-states (Schiller et al., 1995). A transmigrant then is seen as inhabiting transnational social fields, which implies “day-to-day activities of social reproduction” (Fouron & Schiller, 2001, p. 544) within and across national boundaries.

Despite greater emphasis on immigrants and their social lives, transnational studies have not been immune to critique about their engagement with questions of gender. Pessar and Mahler (2003) call out the lack of engagement with gender issues in these studies. Fouron and Schiller (2001) too echo this concern and offer an example of gender analysis from this approach through a study of gender hierarchies in both countries inhabited by transmigrant Haitian American women. Historical narratives of the nation for instance, transmit gendered norms for Haitian men and women, which they internalize as transmigrants. At the same time, migration offers better economic resources

to transmigrant Haitian women, who use gift-giving practices to increase their social standing in their homeland and overcome some of these gendered norms.

North (2013) characterizes these as subject-ification processes in her study of literacy classes for Nepalese domestic workers in the U.K. She contends that these immigrant women exercise creative though limited agency when they undertake literacy classes. So, being literate must be studied across the transnational social spaces that the women may inhabit. As mothers, daughters, wives, female domestics and friends, they negotiate their *literate* identities differently across these spaces. For instance, the immigrant domestic worker feels empowered by her ability to fill an immigration form in English. Also, during her daily interactions with family back home, her family may value and take pride in her English literacy skills. Nevertheless, she cannot find alternative employment to that of a domestic worker since her visa status limits her possibilities. North's contention is that these differing gendered contexts and their gamut of power relations, are vital to understanding how immigrant women may construct their *educated* selves.

Mahler and Pessar (2001) also usefully conceptualize these gendered transnational spaces in the notion of "gendered geographies of power." Like North (2013), they find that habitual transnational ties are an integral part of immigrant women's daily lives. This necessitates a multiscalar approach to gender hierarchies. However, Mahler and Pessar theorize individual agency differently in processes of subject-ification. They strongly endorse including cognitive initiative and resourcefulness as agency. This leads to their contention that dropping education in anticipation of

migration ought to be understood as an individual's creative strategy, even if the imagined migration does not come to pass. In effect, Mahler and Pessar insist that agency should be seen as both "corporal and cognitive" for transmigrants (p. 447).

A relatively recent development of the transnational approach discusses immigrant subjectivity as being even more rooted in local context. Translocal studies offer deeper insights into transmigrant lives through an emphasis on the multiple localities that shape and are shaped by transmigrants (Conradson & McKay, 2007; McKay, 2001; 2006). Translocal studies emerged as an extension of a transnational approach, aiming to prioritize place-based phenomena and rootedness in the midst of mobility:

[Translocality] recognises that localities continue to be important as sources of meaning and identity for mobile subjects; at the level of human experience, the distinctiveness of place is retained rather than eroded by global migration flows The formation of migrant selfhood is usually more closely related to localities within nations than to nation-states At the level of everyday experience, we believe it thus makes as much sense to think of *trans-local* as *trans-national* subjectivities. (Conradson & McKay, 2007, p. 168)

Translocal scholars argue that this rootedness of mobile subjects in multiple localities in itself creates connections between these local communities and extends these spaces in multi-scalar processes (Appadurai, 1996; Brickell & Datta, 2011; Dirlik, 2000; Escobar, 2001). Moreover, not just the social lives of translocal subjects but their affective lives are central to translocal studies, which emphasize the range of emotions that mark

transmigrant experiences, such as pride, guilt and shame. For instance, translocal subjects desire and negotiate physical co-presence in multiple localities such as at a family event, even when they seek to fulfill their desires and aspirations through mobility. Therefore, translocal scholars argue for an approach that sees “a continuum from the corporeal body of the migrant to transnational spaces” (Brickell and Datta, 2011, p. 5).

Though they draw inspiration from feminist studies on migration and affect, this sub-group of studies, much like transnational studies, does not prioritize questions of gender in migration (Greiner and Sakdapolrak, 2013; Peleikis, 2003; Lachenmann, 2010). However, the actor-oriented agentic approach of these studies can help elucidate the material and affective aspects of the experiences of dependent immigrant women. Translocal situatedness will be seen in this study as a counterweight to the precarity of immigration status. It offers these immigrant women a means to negotiate belonging across multiple scales of place-time, despite a restrictive immigration status.

Gender and “Skilled” Migration

Unlike the broad-sweeping view of globalization studies or the generalized approach of transmigrant studies, feminist scholars in the field of migration studies have focused on specific social classes of immigrant women and their experiences. Research by feminist scholars in migration extends an intersectional approach (Crenshaw, 1989) to denote the intersection of the public sphere (work and social life) with the private (domestic) sphere of immigrant women (Meares, 2010; Raghuram, 2004). Accordingly, immigrant identities are seen as constructed through the social relations of family and work, but as also situated at the intersection of gender, class, race and culture. The

scholars in this group write with the clear mandate of bringing gender into migration research (Gabaccia, 1996; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992; 1994; 2000; Pedraza, 1991).

Borrowing from feminist intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989), they argue that the intersections of various social systems of oppression cannot be separated one from the other in the lives and experiences of immigrant women.

Crenshaw's (1989) classic analysis of anti-discrimination law demonstrated how a "single-axis" approach to legal remediation excludes the experiences of doubly or multiply disadvantaged groups such as women of color. Crenshaw argued that the multiply disadvantaged legal subject is the most representative subject for the whole group. In other words, the intersectional experience of discrimination (racial/sexist) is greater than the sum of discrimination along a single axis. Crenshaw's analogy of a four-way traffic intersection leaves an indelible image of her main argument against the unidirectional approach:

Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination. (p. 63)

Intersectionality has found a wide audience in educational research and policy discourses (Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Hancock, 2007; Unterhalter, 2012; Verloo, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006). In migration studies as well, scholars have sought to better situate the experiences of immigrant women through an intersectional approach. In an exemplar

study from this group, Le Espiritu (1999) disputes the notion of greater post-migration gender equality for all women. She delineates categories of salaried professionals, entrepreneurs and waged laborers to contextualize gender relations among diverse groups of Asian American immigrants. Le Espiritu contends that immigration may in fact lead to further solidification of traditional patriarchy in some households. Also, higher levels of education do not ensure gender equality for all Asian American immigrant women. For instance, racism at work adversely affects relations at home for salaried professional women in this group. Their prior education is not recognized at work and their upward career mobility is limited. These pressures in turn lead to disputes at home, since both Asian immigrant men and women struggle to come to terms with their lower social status. It is only in the case of waged labor that gender role reversals are possible, at least where low-skilled Asian women are more in demand as factory workers. But here too, low wages keep working class Asian women tied to abusive partners for economic reasons.

Specific to the population of high-skilled immigrant women, research has centered around the phenomenon termed “de-skilling” (Salaff, 2000; Suto, 2009). Man (2004) helpfully clarifies the use of “skills” from the intersectional perspective in gender and migration. She states that skilled workers possess tertiary education and are valued in the labor market, but she uses the terms “in full cognizance of the role of skill” (p. 137) operating along the intersectional axes of gender, class, race and ethnicity. Thus, as much as they seem to adopt a purely human capital approach to education, these studies also bring a sense of social justice to the notion of skills.

Taking the de-skilling analysis a step further, Cuban (2010) builds on Kingma's (2006) three-fold framework that conceptualizes education and immigration decisions for immigrant women using the metaphors of *itineraries*, *routes* and *dead ends*. Cuban's study concerns immigrant women working in the British care industry. First, Cuban finds that women in developing countries such as India and the Philippines, invest in professional nursing education, which determines their *itinerary* to England. Next, they pay recruitment agencies which promise them visas as *routes* to jobs. Ultimately, however, regulatory bodies that deal with the adaptation of immigrants' educational credentials, place these women in *dead ends* of endless training and low-skilled work, such as caregivers for the aging. In view of these institutional barriers, Cuban concludes, similar to Le Espiritu (1999) and Man (2004), that education alone cannot safeguard the aspirations of professional immigrant women. In this sense, these intersectionality studies share a concern for regulatory reform of the labor markets with the neo-Marxist group of studies.

Intersectionality studies specific to the Indian American population (George 1997; Gupta, 1997; Kurien, 1999) suggest that class, race and religion have been inadequately explored in this context. In her study of Hindu and pan-Indian organizations among the Indian population of California, Kurien (1999) argues that gender and class largely determine leadership within these organizations that seem to promote a patriarchal family unit through Hindu religious discourse:

The diversity of gender models within Hinduism and Indian society are homogenized, and the Hindu Indian woman is constructed as a virtuous and self-

sacrificing homemaker, enabling the professional success of her husband and the academic achievements of her children through her unselfish actions on their behalf. Simultaneously, however, Hindu Indian culture is characterized as being gender egalitarian. (p. 650)

Interestingly, Kurien also suggests that higher levels of education among both men and women in this population are used as justification for a religious gender equality myth. However, Kurien does not offer an analysis of the gendered Hindu subject, since her emphasis remains on organizational theory.

It is noteworthy that there is general agreement about regulatory reform within studies that take an intersectional approach. This follows naturally from the initial context of intersectionality theory – legal and institutional reform (Crenshaw, 1989; Williams, 1991). For instance, Cuban (2010) and Man (2004) contend that de-skilling can be remedied by regulatory reform so as to recognize immigrants' credentials on arrival. While intersectionality studies share the demand for regulatory reform with the neo-Marxist group, they do not factor in globalization and nation-state forces in their analyses of the lives of immigrant women.

By considering family and work connections, the intersectional perspective widens the scope of research on immigrant women, more so than the neo-Marxist group or transmigrant studies. Also, this approach brings an additional layer of immigrant identity (race, culture, social and professional class) to the analysis of gender and migration. Besides, the education of immigrant women receives greater attention in this body of research than under globalization and transnational studies. Education is also at

the center of many of the studies when they raise questions of credentialing for immigrant women. Overall, the arguments in this group could help examine some aspects of migration for dependent Indian immigrant women like family-based migratory decisions and lack of access to the labor market. But it still fails to capture the dynamics of the dependent immigrant status, a confluence of state power, cultural and market gender logics, as well as the women's own creative and agentic self-making within these processes.

Gender and the Immigrant Subject

There are studies across multiple areas of research that prioritize the formation of immigrant subjectivity. For instance, immigrant subject formation is at the heart of anthropological studies of immigrant communities (McDowell, 2008; Ong, 1993; Ong et al., 1996) and in research about diverse notions of education among these communities (Hall, 2002; North, 2013; Villenas, 2001). Here, gender and education receive ample analytical attention since immigrant narratives and modes of self-making are central to the analyses in these studies. This also means that these studies view immigrant subjects as agentic actors situated in an ever-shifting landscape of macro and micro political and socio-economic forces.

Subjectivity and the process of subject-ification are common threads in many of these studies. McDowell (2008) proposes an examination of the gendered and racialized subject-ification processes of immigrant workers in the British service sector. She borrows from Butler's (1990/1999) notion of gender performativity and argues that white heterosexual masculinity remains the norm against which all other forms of gender and

sexuality are judged as normal or deviant, including that of immigrants. Hence, immigrants are seen through this heterosexual matrix as feminized Asian male or ultra-feminized Asian female, fit for suitably gendered labor. However, McDowell maintains that subjection processes are not the only ones shaping immigrants in this context. Immigrant workers also perform their work by resisting and transforming their racialized and gendered subjectivities, though within the disciplining powers of immigration policy and capitalist market needs. An important argument McDowell (2008) makes in this regard is about the mechanism of non-recognition of educational credentials. She suggests that the non-recognition of past education can be seen as a technique of governmentality, since it serves to regulate immigrant subjectivities by marking them as low-skilled. However, McDowell does not hint at regulatory reform, as do the de-skilling studies.

In another study of gendered immigrant subjectivities, Datta et al. (2009) extend the limited research on masculinities in migration studies through their analysis of the lives of immigrant men performing low-skilled jobs in London. They claim that in performing labor considered feminine, such as cleaning or care work, these men tend to emphasize a hyper-masculine work identity in comparison to other masculine labor such as construction. For instance, they associate care work as being protective, or cleaning as being physically challenging. Also, education becomes a means for these men to claim a masculine identity as provider or breadwinner. Education and English skills provide legitimation for these male migrants to justify their migration. Accordingly, immigrant men narrate their motivation for migration as self-improvement, in search of better

educational qualifications, even if they never pursue education, or were subsequently de-skilled to perform low-skilled work.

The importance of the local context of gender and racial hierarchies is reiterated in a study by Cheng (2004) on Filipina domestic workers in Taiwan. In sharp contrast to the macro-level consideration of domestic workers by the neo-Marxist studies, Cheng articulates the importance of a more localized approach for these workers. So she examines how they are “othered” by their employers through gendered and racialized identities. Better education, such as English language skills, may place these immigrant workers in higher standing compared to typical international domestic workers. Still, better education does not guarantee being treated at par by their employers. Employers always conflate social class and national identities to construct domestic workers as being poor and non-Taiwanese. As a Taiwanese recruitment agent in the study states, “I pick someone with education, but not too educated” (as quoted in Cheng, 2004, p. 59). In addition, state control on domestic workers such as a ban on pregnancies, helps impose a racialized nationalist project. Cheng’s multiscalar conceptualization of domestic work is a reminder of the potential of examining subject-ification processes for immigrant women without discounting class and ethnicity.

Among research on South Asian immigrants, there have been studies about gendered subjectivities in the diaspora (Brah, 2005; Grewal, 2005; Mankekar, 2002; Vora, 2008). Yet, relatively few have also considered notions of education in this community. Hall’s (2002) study of the Sikh immigrant community in Britain exceptionally brings together questions of gender, migration and education, but deals

with immigrant youth rather than adult immigrants. Unlike the well-developed body of research on Latina/Chicana notions of education (Anzaldúa, 1987; Bernal, 2001; Elenes, 2001; Tapia et al., 2016; Villenas, 2001), anthropological understanding of gendered and educational identities among South Asian immigrants has much room to grow.

In research that is specific to the population of techworker immigrants, studies are limited again to considering the processes of labor arbitrage and immigration controls that bring these workers to the U.S. (Banerjee, 2006; Chakravartty, 2006). There has been significantly more interest in studying the techworker and call center cultures in India's Silicon Valley (Mankekar & Gupta, 2016; Radhakrishnan, 2011) rather than research on the lives and experiences of techworkers and their families after they migrate. Bhatt, Murty and Ramamurthy (2010) partly address this issue by examining diasporic techworker returnees to India in relation to questions of gender, class and culture. Finally, the issue of dependent and gendered migration has only been examined from a socio-legal studies approach where the experiences of dependent immigrant women have been addressed as domestic violence survivors (Abraham, 2000; Balgamwalla, 2014).

Synthesis of Research

The literature that frames this study conceives power relations in an increasingly layered manner. Most neo-Marxist studies on immigrant women primarily see power as vested in global capital that exploits immigrant women's labor for its profit-making ends. Transnational and translocal studies recognize the power of the nation-state in shaping the lives of immigrant subjects. Then, studies that take an intersectional approach to gender and migration recognize institutional power, be it in the family or in the labor

market, and seek to remedy power imbalances through regulatory reform. Finally, it is the gendered subjectivities approach that places power at the center of the daily lives of immigrants. Through in-depth analyses of subjection and self-making techniques, this last group of studies effectively captures power relations at various levels that shape immigrants as gendered and educated subjects.

From a scalar perspective as well, the neo-Marxist studies are primarily concerned with global structures of capital and class. On the meso-level, most of the intersectionality studies focus on socio-economic institutions such as the family or labor market reform. Both these approaches account for a limited range of agency for immigrant women. Education is seen in these groups as relatively immaterial to immigrant women's place within the global economy, their families or the labor market. But dependent Indian immigrant women are a hybrid of the educated bourgeoisie and the feminized proletariat. Neither are they de-skilled in the labor market, where they are not all permitted to participate. Indeed, it is their positioning as *educated* albeit dependent subjects that locates them within the multiple political and socio-economic matrices of power operating in their daily lives.

Chapter 3: Making the Familiar, Unfamiliar

The study was designed as an ethnography of dependent immigrant women from India living in and around the city of Atlanta. The Indian immigrant population of Atlanta has grown steadily over the last decade⁷. In this chapter, I describe the research site, fieldwork for the study and data analysis. I also reflect on relationships developed in the field and address some validity concerns for the study.

I was familiar with this issue and the research site in multiple ways. Not long before I began doctoral studies, I had been a dependent immigrant. It had been a relatively shorter period than average (a year), but all the same, gave me an experience that I could draw on for this study. I was no stranger to the city of Atlanta either. From the small town in rural Georgia where I lived with my partner, I had visited the city frequently and found solace and conviviality in its numerous Indian shopping areas and community events. This sense of familiarity was no doubt due to that nameless sense of comfort that most immigrants derive from seeing others, who look like them, go about their business. But beyond a purely autoethnographic account of my experience and my city, I sought through this study to understand how the dependent immigrant experience could be different, how the city could take other shapes. This need to seek other experiences did not arise from a sense of being objective by overlooking what I knew. It arose instead from that deep human need to rediscover one's unique story in the stories of others. So I have endeavored throughout fieldwork, analysis and writing to see

⁷ In the state of Georgia, the Indian population is the second largest immigrant group (after Mexican), almost all concentrated in the metropolitan region of Atlanta (Map the Impact, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

divergences and convergences in individual narratives, those of different participants and mine.

Atlanta

Diasporic spaces offer lifelines for immigrants to set up roots in their adopted country. As Brah (2005) notes, they “mark the intersectionality of contemporary conditions of transmigration of people, capital, commodities and culture” (p. 242). In Decatur, a county adjacent to downtown Atlanta and within the Greater Atlanta Area, there is a large shopping area comprising solely Indian stores, salons and restaurants. It is one of two such malls in the city, Patel Plaza and Global Mall. Global Mall in particular hosts Indian community events and festivals.

During the year that I was a dependent immigrant, with my partner, I would make the three-hour trip from our town in rural Georgia to Atlanta, at least once, if not twice a month. At the time, Atlanta for us was quite simply a visit to the temple, Indian groceries and an Indian restaurant, in that order. It was a place to materially and otherwise replenish our immigrant selves. During this period, I had begun fieldwork without knowing it. On our visits to the Indian areas, I would read all the bulletin boards at the entrance. They advertised babysitting, meal delivery, sewing and other services offered within the Indian community. I would diligently collect and read every *desi* (South Asian) magazine, bundles of which were left outside these malls and events. From these, I had an idea about local get-togethers and goings-on for different sub-regional Indian communities in the city. From visits to the suburban home of my partner’s cousin, I also knew that there were entire neighborhoods in the north of the city that were almost

entirely Indian households. From numerous online forums, I was familiar with the fact that there were substantial numbers of women who were dependent immigrants living in Atlanta. While these preliminary visits gave the outline to the Indian presence in the city, it was through fieldwork that I was able to draw a more complete picture.

Recruitment

In June 2015, I began fieldwork by designing and printing flyers (Appendix A) that requested participants for the study. I posted these flyers at various Indian areas in the city. I also reached out to Indian community associations by e-mail and phone. When the secretaries or board members of these associations heard about my study, all but one of them concluded that I had to do a survey and should forward them a questionnaire. When I explained that I would have to interview those interested repeatedly, they offered to forward my e-mail announcement to their membership. A week passed and I got no responses.

The following weekend I heard from my first participant. Maya⁸ had seen the flyer and concluded that I had a research job to offer anyone with a H-4 visa. So I clarified that there was no job being offered, and that instead I would need participants to share their experiences and let me record them for my dissertation. As it turned out, Maya was a dependent immigrant and looking for ways to study or work further. She said that as a former graduate student herself, she understood the need for research and would be glad to help me out.

⁸ Pseudonyms used throughout for participants and families.

The discussion over this first phone call offered some insights into the nature of ethnographic recruitment of participants. During our call, there was an understanding that I would guide Maya through what I knew of the doctoral admission process and that she would give me interviews. Behar (1995) describes some of these uncomfortable negotiations in her essay on her return to Mexico to meet her informant. The discomfort of this quid pro quo is greater for the researcher as she stands to gain exponentially from the research.

After Maya's call, I heard from just one other participant as a result of posting the recruitment flyers. Lila explained that she was keen on making new "contacts" in the city since she had moved there quite recently from Virginia. She figured that she would make new contacts, me and other participants, through the study. I had less success from online posts on community forums for dependent immigrant women in Atlanta. One participant, Tara, responded to an online post and showed interest in the study. Tara too said that she would be a participant as she saw the need for a study on dependent migration. Then, during a community event at an Atlanta temple, I met Nisha who was ready to participate from my first explanation of the study. Nisha felt passionately about the injustice of the dependent immigrant visa. Also, during a visit to see my partner's family friends in Atlanta, I met Riya, a dependent immigrant, who also offered to recruit some of her former neighbors for the study. I had found my five focal participants. Each of them helped me find one or two other participants who eventually became the six non-focal participants. Lastly, I reached out to an activist for dependent immigrants, Rashi

Bhatnagar, who has a popular Facebook page for H-4 visa holders. Rashi too had recently moved to Atlanta and agreed to be interviewed a couple of times for the study.

It took a few rounds of interviews to figure out who could be the focal participants. I sought to find a representative group of focal participants by age, years as a dependent, and by range of experiences as a dependent. Access to their daily routines and activities also guided my decision to pick the five focal participants. For instance, Riya hosted me during all my visits to Atlanta. This enabled extensive recording and observation of her and her family's daily lives. With Maya and Lila, assisting them with college applications meant that I spent significant amounts of time at their homes as well. Nisha's interest in the study meant that it was easy to schedule interviews and visits to her home as well. With Riya, Nisha, Maya and Lila, I was also familiar with the spouses and children due to the frequency and length of my visits. Lastly, Gita's case was one that I was able to follow from the day the family relocated to the U.S. So I was able to observe and record her struggles to find and establish a support network around her and her family that included two school-going children.

Of the six non-focal participants, three were Riya's friends and former neighbors – Diya, Asha and Mili. I met Tara through an online forum for dependent immigrants. Tara's busy remote work schedule meant that she had only limited time available for the study. Radha was my partner's cousin's wife and had been a dependent immigrant almost a decade ago. Finally, Hari, the only male participant, was referred late in the study by Nisha, who met Hari when he would take his son to her babysitting service.

Table 1: Focal and Non-Focal Participants

Name	Age	Education	Prior Employment	Years on H-4 visa	Spouse	Children
Maya	26	Master's in Biotechnology (M.Tech.)	Science Tutor	2 (Mar 2015)	Krishna (31)	--
Riya	43	Master's in Zoology (M.Sc.)	Research Assistant in Entomology	10 (2005-15)	Arun (50)	Raaga (18) Alisha (11)
Nisha	26	Bachelor's in Information Science Engineering (B.E.)	Software Developer	3 (Dec 2013)	Akash (32)	--
Gita	37	Bachelor's in Commerce (B.Com.)	Personal Secretary/Airline Ticket Agent	2 (July 2015)	Shri	Ayush (13) Pia (7)
Lila	21	Diploma in Electronics (Vocational)	--	2 (June 2015)	Siva	--
Tara	31	Master's in Journalism (M.A.)	Education Consultant	2.5 (Sep 2014)	Farhan (33)	--
Diya	37	Master's in Computer Management (M.C.M.)	Software Developer	11 (May 2006)	Atul (39)	Abhay (8) Ajit (6)
Asha	36	Bachelor's in Architecture (B.Arch.)	Architect (3D design)	10 (2004-14)	Raj (39)	Anita (9) Anshu (5)
Mili	46	Bachelor of Laws (LL.B)	Legal Intern	4 (2006-10)	Dev	Ira (13)
Radha	40	Bachelor's in Electronics Engineering (B.E.)	Lecturer	4 (2004-08)	Gopal (45)	Meera (18) Jia (13)
Hari	42	Master's in Mathematics (M.Sc.)	Software Developer	3 (Feb 2014)	Veena (34)	Kiran (8)

Focal participant names are in bold. A community activist, Rashi Bhatnagar, was also interviewed for the study.

Schedules

As I began to schedule introductory phone calls and interviews, I discovered that participants rarely had time for an hour-long interview. They were hard-pressed to make space in their homes and daily routines to let me, their guest, follow them around as they went about their lives. Mothers in the study had responsibilities of taking children to school, bringing them home, and watching over their homework, besides preparing food and volunteering at children's schools. Newly married participants had volunteering commitments as well, or had art classes, or held after-school camps for neighborhood children.

I used a social media app that is popular in India and with much of its diaspora – Whatsapp – for scheduling purposes. On Riya's suggestion, I created a group on Whatsapp for study participants where I would periodically post about the progress of the study. Still, scheduling had to happen individually, often through days of follow-up so that they could make time for my visit or interview. Skype was helpful for unplanned interviews, whenever any of them had some time available. Overall, during the year and a half of the study, I had nine separate occasions to visit participants at their home. Interviews would last between half hour to an hour and a half. During home visits, recording was more extensive and ran into a few hours each day. With Maya and Lila, interviews were conducted in Tamil as they were more comfortable conversing in Tamil. These interviews were translated at the transcription stage. Other interviews were in English with occasional code-switching in Hindi. These parts were also translated during transcription. I stayed with Riya during the week-long visits to Atlanta and met other

participants for a day or an afternoon at their homes. An interview protocol is attached (Appendix B) and served as a broad template to guide interviews. Interview prompts took cues from developing narratives and played a vital role in generating data.

While I had imagined bringing everyone together for community events and/or group interviews, schedules made it difficult to coordinate group meetings. On one occasion, after weeks of scheduling, only Riya, Nisha and Lila turned up for a group interview at Riya's home. Travel time and traffic around the city also made it difficult to do these group interviews more often. But there was also reluctance to discuss experiences with others they may not meet again. The four friends in the group, Riya, Diya, Mili and Asha were ready to do a group interview but again, due to individual schedules, this never panned out. Instead, I decided to visit Indian areas and events with individual participants. For instance, during visits to their homes, Riya, Maya and Nisha offered to also visit a temple or Indian grocery store nearby. On two occasions, I attended Indian community events – a celebration of Indian Independence Day and a religious event at a local temple – with Maya and Nisha as well as their spouses.

Qualitative research design has to accommodate and be responsive to the context of the study (Maxwell, 2005). It was clear from the outset that participants were not familiar with online forums for H-4 women. Instead, social media played a more significant role in their daily lives. Hence, the focus of the study shifted to understanding their general use of social media rather than specific forums. Furthermore, I had imagined before beginning the study that some if not all participants may be directly involved in immigration policy activism, calling for a change in H-4 regulations. However, it turned

out that none of the focal or non-focal participants were engaged in activist efforts, such as online petitioning of local representatives or meeting other H-4 women about their issues. This meant that H-4 political activism would have to be examined separate from participants' narratives. So I adapted the study design to meet these changes in the field and decided to focus exclusively on participant narratives.

Critical Narrative Analysis

It had been my goal to elicit narratives about dependent migration, particularly as it related to being *educated* middle-class immigrant women. In my pre-fieldwork conception of narrative, I had seen narratives as pure, standalone and whole structures that participants would let me record. But as interviews progressed, it became clear that narratives are negotiated through the filter of participant-researcher relationship (Hymes, 2003; Riessman, 1993). Indeed, feminist anthropologists have advocated the need for deep reflexivity in interrogating researcher-participant power differentials within the context of production and dissemination of research (Behar & Gordon, 1995). It was evident to me that, depending on factors such as age difference, number of years in the U.S. and former educational and work experience, my interactions with participants and the subsequent narratives that were generated varied significantly. So it became important to record these differences in the generation of narratives, besides a pure narrative analysis.

Tedlock's (1991) model of narrative ethnography was particularly useful for this study. Tedlock describes it as interweaving ethnographic fieldwork memoir with the actual writing of ethnography. So the focus in narrative ethnography shifts from the

researcher or subjects alone towards the ethnographic dialogue between researcher and subjects. As a result, differences in gender, race and class are highlighted in this form of writing. I endeavored to take this approach in maintaining fieldnotes and documenting unrecorded moments such as those during home visits, community events and informal conversations. In the analysis stage as well, I acknowledged commonalities and moments of mutual recognition in participant narratives, but also sought to record thoughts and experiences that diverged from them. For this, it was immensely helpful to memo interviews after recording as well as after each transcription.

Narratives are seen as enabling the interpretation of the meaning attached to life experiences by narrators (Patton, 2009). Scholars in narrative research have noted the popularity of narratives as data in a range of social scientific disciplines and called it the “narrative turn” (Riessman, 1993; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Riessman (2008) helpfully defines narrative by drawing from the middle of the continuum of definitions of narrative in the social and human sciences:

A speaker connects events into a sequence that is consequential for later action and for the meanings that the speaker wants listeners to take away from the story. Events perceived by the speaker as important are selected, organized, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience. (p. 3)

Narrative research is increasingly popular in educational research as well, where critical narrative research has found particular purchase among educational scholars (Bruner, 1987; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002; Wortham, 2001). Bringing a critical approach to narrative studies involves examining the broader social context of narratives instead of a

pure textual or formal analysis. In a study on Brazilian domestic workers and their narratives about dropping out of school, Souto-Manning (2014) devised a method called critical narrative analysis (CNA) that combines critical discourse analysis (CDA) approaches (Fairclough, 1989; Wodak, 2001) with narrative analysis. CNA examines how larger institutional discourses can seep into everyday narratives and conversely, may also draw from the latter.

CDA views institutional discourses as potentially colonizing and assumes that institutional discourses may have the power to transform social relations. Yet, a discourse is only powerful when it is recycled in stories everyday people tell.

CNA calls for a joint and balanced focus on social issues as well as linguistic (textual) analysis, considering the complex ways in which language and the social world are intertwined. (Souto-Manning, 2014, p. 163)

This interweaving of the macro CDA approach with the textual narrative approach is particularly useful for this study, which seeks to examine socio-cultural and policy-based discursive factors that shape gendered “dependence.” At the same time, CNA helps to understand how the dependence discourse is appropriated and negotiated in narrative self-making by immigrant women. CNA helps read participants’ migration narratives through “the presence of recycled institutional discourses intertextually woven into their fabric” (Souto-Manning, 2014, p. 163). So using CNA after transcription of interviews, excerpts were identified where instances of “being made” and “self-making” were evident in narrative positions. These gave the recurring themes of the study. Data collection and analysis was considered complete when themes would recur towards the

latter part of the study. A detailed explanation of the specific application of CNA in this study precedes the findings in chapter five.

The Catharsis of “I’m Helping You”

In order to advance feminist methodologies within critical social science research, Sprague (2005) argued that social scientific methodology risks perpetuating an objectification of marginalized groups by “studying down” rather than “studying up” or “laterally” within systems of domination. Sprague contended that a singular focus on oppressed groups could enable systems of sovereign power to stay in place, rather than opening up research to consider the shifting nature of power itself. In this sense, this study can be seen as a lateral one, since researcher and researched are located in a similar social class and cultural context. Still, the study was not entirely done on level ground, considering the power written into all research relationships.

The first critical difference between participants and me was the fact that I was no longer on the dependent visa. In the initial months of interviews, this fact was ascertained by direct and indirect questions from participants (and at times their partners) to confirm that I was now a permanent resident. It was also true that my pathway to permanent residence was significantly shorter than for most techworkers and their families, due to the privilege of my partner’s job at a public university. There was no way to bridge this distance between us, except with a reminder of my own brief experience as a dependent that had been a catalyst for my dissertation work. So I was grateful when, at some point in the study, almost all participants said to me, “I’m helping you.” They said this in reference to helping me gather data and complete my research project. But this phrase

had an almost cathartic effect on me during fieldwork. I attribute this to the release the statement granted me from two difficulties of research in the social sciences – first, from the self-important sense of immense responsibility that one assumes with “taking” data from people, and second, from the guilt that is a corollary to depicting real people in research. With those in the study who were older than me, such as Riya, Mili or Radha, when they said they were only helping me, it created a sense of protection. I felt grateful to them for indulging me during my first research project. For those who were younger than me such as Maya, Lila and Nisha, when they said, “I’m helping you,” it released me from the sense of owing them a favor.

In fact, throughout the study, with younger participants like Maya, Nisha and Lila, I was aware of a more intense sense of pain about their dependent condition. They had not had the time to adapt to it unlike the older immigrants and participants. So in interviewing these younger participants, there was a sense of guilt as if interviews and prompts were only mining their pain. As a result, I felt a need to reciprocate them for sharing their stories. This began as a quid pro quo – a common social relational trading of time and interviews for information and guidance about education and/or work. With Maya and Lila, both of whom aspired to pursue higher education in the U.S., I was able to assist with preparation for entrance exams to a graduate program, selection of departments and universities and with exploring possibilities for assistantships. I also assisted with preparing a statement of purpose and the credentialing process for Indian degrees. However, neither was able to obtain admission – Maya had to relocate to California before she could complete the admission process and Lila could not find an

affordable pathway to a bachelor's degree in the U.S. I continue to follow up with them about their educational aspirations. Still, towards the end of the study, all these interactions were absorbed into a reassuring, "*Akka*, I'm helping you," as Lila affirmed during our last meeting.

The next important distance in the participant-researcher relationship came with the fact that all but three participants (Gita, Tara and Mili) were from a science or technology background. With a different approach to research studies, most in the study had difficulty comprehending interviews as data but were also respectfully curious asking every now and then, "So what have you found so far?" The question also signaled their general skepticism about graduate studies that were not directly focused on skills and the job market. Though most techworkers are trained as engineers, they develop skills while doing projects at work, one after the other. Even if participants were not all from an IT background, many subscribed to the view that on-the-job skills mattered more than theoretical knowledge. Furthermore, they were only familiar with the model of doctoral studies in India, where prospects after doctoral studies are negligible compared to the U.S. For instance, in the middle of an interview I would be asked, "What's the use of studying without a job guaranteed after?" The question partly addressed their situation but was also directed at me. Before I could get into the joys of learning or the fact that graduate studies involve developing skills too, I would hear, "No use." I discuss some of these differences in my experiences and participants' narratives with regard to education in chapters five and six.

This skepticism towards my research did however facilitate one form of validity (LeCompte, Preissle & Tesch, 1993). The question, “So what have you found so far?” helped initiate a validity process. For instance, I was able to discuss emerging themes with Maya and Nisha, as well as their partners, whenever they would ask me this question. This helped me articulate what I was finding in the data and also re-think themes based on our discussions. In addition, over the duration of the study, various news articles on dependent immigrant women in other cities in the U.S. also corroborated some of the study findings, though on a more cursory level. Finally, interviews with the community activist, Rashi Bhatnagar, also served to validate emerging findings. She had a broader spectrum of experience on the issue through years of listening to dependent immigrant women from around the country. So it was helpful to discuss some of the study findings with Rashi as well.

Lastly, I was always apprehensive about my own “insider” status in this study. I had lived in Bangalore, India’s Silicon Valley, but was unfamiliar with the world of IT workers and H-1B work, except from what I could gather from friends and cousins in the IT field. Also, having left India in 2004, I found it challenging to act Indian during visits to participants’ homes and community gatherings. For instance, it was difficult to comply with dress codes or gender-based space segregation. Even more challenging were social and cultural norms about being unaccompanied to visit these spaces. Still, I endeavored to use this insider-and-part-outsider status to gather richer data, with the fresh eyes of an outsider but with access to the cultural intuition of the insider. In meshing autobiography with ethnographic work, Behar (2003) has advocated “an edgy form of knowing that

dared to surprise the knower too” (p. 14). In transposing my experiences and narrative with those of participants, I sought this deeper knowledge through the writing of this dissertation.

Chapter 4: Portraits

Maya

In early June 2015, a week after posting flyers, I got a call on a Sunday afternoon from the first participant. She introduced herself as Maya, a graduate in biotechnology from India, and asked about the research study. Maya had assumed that the flyer was a call for a research internship. I explained that it was instead a research study about H-4 women. Maya had come to the U.S. in March on a H-4 visa. She was interested in the study. Her husband, Krishna, was here on contract for an IT project with his Indian employer.

Maya was twenty-five years old and had married soon after her M.Tech in biotechnology from an engineering school in the state of Tamil Nadu. She was from a small town near the city of Madurai. Her father was a small business owner and her mother held a B.A. degree. The sheltered and conservative life for women in their family had meant that her mother could not seek employment. Maya's mother was a strong influence in her life, instilling in her daughter the need to achieve much through her education. So Maya had aspired to complete higher education in the U.S. and pursue a career in research and teaching. Her marriage to Krishna was seen by her and the family as a step in this direction, since Krishna too had been keen on marrying someone who planned to pursue a career after marriage. In the year following their marriage, as Krishna worked at his IT job in Bangalore, Maya had interviewed for research positions at a cotton research institute and at Biocon, a leading Indian biotech company. However, she only got an online tutoring position, where she helped high school kids with their science

assignments. At the same time, Krishna had to leave for the U.S. on a H-1B project. So the couple decided to move together to the U.S.

From our first phone call, Maya described a need “eating into her” to “do something” with her education. She felt that her rigorous M.Tech program had given her the research skills to obtain a technician or other position at a research lab in the U.S. Since her arrival, she had been searching for a H-1B sponsor or a volunteering position that would lead her to a job. She hesitated about committing to a doctoral program, since Krishna’s project would last only six months, after which they may have to move. Maya was also hesitant to spend on graduate applications and was unaware of funding opportunities for graduate studies. During our interviews and my home visits, we discussed possible departments that she could look into for a doctoral program and explored funding options for her. In fall 2015, Maya prepared for and took the GRE and TOEFL exams and also applied to a doctoral program at the University of Georgia. But, by early spring 2016, there was talk at Krishna’s work of moving the entire team to their head office in Connecticut. Maya too had not heard back from UGA. By the end of summer 2016, as all his teammates found positions at other locations, Krishna too found one in Anaheim, California. Before she left, Maya was optimistic about re-applying for a doctoral program at their new location.

Over the duration of the study, I came to know Maya and Krishna well enough for them to visit my home for a weekend. Maya always expressed her determination to fulfill her and her mother’s aspirations that she build a research career in microbiology in the U.S. For this, she said that she had Krishna’s full support. But she also felt pressure to

meet familial demands about having children, as it had been about four years since her marriage, a relatively long gap without children for her family. Maya's chief concern about her immigration status was that it prevented her from seeking employment with her current research skills in biotechnology. She viewed further education as a means to access employment at least in the long term, besides a means to fulfill her passion for research in the sciences in the short term.

Riya

In late June 2015, I visited some friends in the northern Atlanta suburb of Cumming. The friends were from Muscat and were visiting their extended family in Atlanta, Riya's family. During that first visit, Riya expressed interest in the study and enthusiastically offered to help recruit additional participants among her friends and neighbors. Eventually, she would help me find three non-focal participants from her network. At the time of the first meeting, she was transitioning to green card approval, which took six more months to be completed. Riya had been on the H-4 visa for ten years.

Now living in Mumbai, Riya's family was originally from the state of Kerala. Her father was a retired nuclear research scientist and her mother, a high school graduate, was a homemaker. Riya admired her parents for what she described as their "brilliance" and "talent" in science, math, art, cooking and sports. Her older sister was a lecturer in the English department at a women's college in Mumbai. Riya completed her M.Sc. in Zoology in Mumbai and shortly after, married Arun, an engineer. After marriage, the couple moved to the nearby city of Pune, where Riya found employment as a Project

Assistant in the Entomology Department of a large government research lab. However, when she had complications from her first pregnancy, she had to quit her job. Soon after, Arun found employment in Hong Kong. During his four-year stay there, Riya moved twice from India to Hong Kong. Each time Arun's project would end and the family have to move back. After their second daughter was born in India, Arun found a project in Indiana with an IT company. Riya too moved to the U.S. with their daughters on the H-4 visa. Since the children were young at the time (an eight-year old and a one-year old), Riya said that the dependent immigrant status was not a chief concern for her at the time. Besides, Arun's job meant frequent travel throughout the week when she was entirely responsible for childcare. Soon after, the family moved from the small town in Indiana to Atlanta.

In Atlanta again, Arun's work as a consultant took him to different U.S. cities from Monday to Friday. He would be back home for the weekend and leave again on Monday morning. Riya preferred to stay in Atlanta so as to keep the children's schooling stable. As the children grew older, she finally felt the need to find work outside home. Her interests had shifted from zoology to her children's education, to baking, and to photography, a skill that she had developed over the years. She explored options to be a substitute teacher at local schools and to start a home-based baking business. With the older daughter, Raaga, leaving for college, the younger one, Alisha, beginning middle school, and the green card approval almost complete, Riya was beginning to consider her options more seriously than in the years past.

Staying at Riya's home during my visits to Atlanta meant that I came to know her family and her extended family in Mumbai quite well. During these visits, I was most struck by the absence of Arun at their home and Riya's twice-daily interactions with her mother and sister in Mumbai. Indeed, Riya was in almost constant contact with her college-going daughter, Raaga, now enrolled as a freshman at the University of Georgia as well as her niece, who was completing graduate studies in Pittsburg. All the women in the family, including Riya, were a strong presence, expressing their opinions clearly and making decisions for the family. Still, Riya always said that her decade-long dependent immigrant status did not bother her at all since she was almost a single parent in Arun's absence. On more than one occasion, she described her former training in zoology as outdated and also a poor career choice for someone like her who had a more artistic and creative bent.

Nisha

During an event at a Hindu temple in Atlanta, I met the third focal participant, Nisha. We struck a conversation and I explained the study to her. Nisha immediately offered to be part of the study as she was on the H-4 visa, frustrated with it and ready to "step up and speak to the government if need be." Indeed, Nisha was opinionated and outspoken about a range of issues, as I discovered over the course of our interactions. She had graduated in engineering from Bangalore and worked for a year at a top software firm in the city before marriage. Her marriage to Akash, an IT engineer, meant that she moved to Atlanta with him, shortly after their marriage.

Raised in a farming family that had only a generation ago switched to professional employment, Nisha's views on various issues reflected a struggle to balance tradition with modernity. She felt a deep sense of duty to her father, a senior corporate manager, who had obtained an engineering degree late in life. Her mother had completed high school and was a homemaker. Despite Nisha's interest in psychology, she chose to study engineering to fulfill her father's aspirations. After engineering, she sought to do a master's degree in the U.S. but did not want to pursue further education using her father's money. When she did not qualify for U.S. graduate admissions due to lower scores on one of the entrance tests, Nisha chose to seek employment in India instead. At the multinational IT firm where she worked, she had just made a place for herself, when her marriage to Akash was arranged by her family with her consent. After their marriage, the couple considered their options to stay in India or to move to the U.S. and live off a single income. The couple had debts to repay in India – Akash from a housing loan and Nisha who felt responsible for repaying a wedding loan being repaid by her father. Moving to the U.S. would help them repay their debts in a short period, even if Akash were the sole earning member. Moreover, Nisha felt that her highly marketable IT skills would lead her to a H-1B position after migration.

When I met her, Nisha had been through two years of unsuccessful H-1B applications. She had briefly explored pursuing a master's program but discovered that she could not afford to repay the educational loan from graduate studies in the short term. Meanwhile, the couple had visitors – Nisha's parents and Akash's mother. Nisha was responsible for taking them around on multiple trips around the country. She was herself

an avid traveller, making travel plans around the country every few months. Further, Nisha had an informal babysitting service at home, where neighbors and friends would leave their kids for an afternoon or evening and pay her by the hour. She also held a summer camp, teaching Math and crafts to children of all ages. In addition, she volunteered as the website developer for a local non-profit. While the volunteering position helped fill the gap on her resume, website development was quite different from her specialization. Midway through the study, Nisha said she would be returning to India by the end of 2016. So she completed an online Oracle certification course that would improve her chances of finding a job on her return to India. She also had plans to start an e-commerce website for women's accessories in India. She worked at times on this site and had plans to seek funding and sellers for the products.

Nisha described all her decisions – marriage, migration, studies – as “practical” decisions. She saw herself as a rational person who valued herself above family and would prioritize her needs over her children, when she became a mother. She saw the couple's move to the U.S. as a career move and always rationalized it as being in their best economic interest. She would always reiterate that their stay here was only temporary and that Akash could always return to his job in Bangalore whenever they chose to do so. She expressed disappointment at not being able to find a H-1B job of her own, despite her strong IT skills. Lastly, she viewed graduate studies as an investment in her career that ought to bear returns within a year.

Gita

In summer 2015, Maya introduced me to her new neighbor, Gita. Gita's husband, Shri, an engineer, worked on the same project as Maya's husband, Krishna. Shri had migrated first and after a few months, Gita and her two children had moved here from India too. Gita was a native of Mumbai and termed her upbringing as "conservative." Her father had retired as chief accountant at a large firm and her late mother had worked in a bank. On her parents' insistence, Gita had studied accounting too and had a bachelor's degree in commerce. But she had found professional accounting exams too difficult and opted instead to do a short-term computer course. This led to a job as personal secretary to the director of a pharmaceutical company. Soon after, Gita's marriage was arranged with Shri. She continued her job till her first child arrived. As daycare services in Mumbai fell short of her expectations, Gita quit her job. Subsequently, she completed an airline ticketing course and found a job in air ticket sales. However, she had to quit this job too, as it involved late-night shifts that she could not manage with a very young child.

Meanwhile, Shri had begun working on year-long projects around the world (South East Asia, Europe and the U.S.). This meant that Gita was completely responsible for childcare, in the absence of significant support from the extended family. During one of Shri's projects in New Jersey, Gita moved to the U.S. with her son on a L-2 visa. But the project lasted only ten months and the family moved back to India. Then, they had their second child, a daughter. At the time, Gita sensed that the children had grown distant to their father. So, in order to have both parents' present in the children's lives, she decided to move to the U.S. once again.

Over the duration of the study, Gita's chief concern remained how the children would adjust to their new schools – one in kindergarten and the other in middle school. Their schooling, friends in the neighborhood and after-school activities occupied her almost full-time. But she was also concerned about what she could do to work in the U.S., including possibly further studies in an area of interest like food and nutrition, or travel. Like Nisha, Gita was an avid traveler and had been to various countries where her husband had worked previously. In our interactions, she frequently made self-effacing statements, while at the same time showing keen awareness of her importance in the household, as well as general social and cultural awareness. Like Riya, Gita stated that the dependent immigrant status did not bother her much since she was almost completely responsible for her children's education.

Lila

It was October 2015 when Lila, the final focal participant, called me after seeing one of the old recruitment flyers in Atlanta. I had a good number of participants by then but Lila's case was highly pertinent to the study for her unique educational background. At twenty-one, Lila was the youngest of the participants. She had completed a vocational diploma in electronics engineering in India and did not have a bachelor's degree. Almost from our first interview, Lila would alternately describe herself as "uneducated" and "college topper." Since childhood, she had dreamt of completing a M.S. degree in the U.S. She said that her arranged marriage had been a means to this end.

Lila belonged to the small town of Thiruthani in the state of Tamil Nadu. Her late father had been a bus conductor and later owned a mechanized textile loom. Her mother

helped run the loom and also did some tailoring work. After the sudden demise of Lila's father when she was thirteen, the family had to rely on the extended family for financial support which was hard to come by. Despite objection from her family, Lila's mother sent both her daughters to an English-medium school rather than a Tamil-medium public school, since their father had wished for them to study medicine or enter the civil services. But when funding and distance to college became an issue, Lila chose to complete a vocational diploma closer to home. She passed grade ten and had three years of vocational training. When she was about to take her final exams, the family arranged her marriage to Siva, a much older software engineer from Chennai. Lila agreed to the marriage since Siva and his parents promised to support her further education. After marriage, Lila completed her final exams at the vocational program and topped her class.

When Siva found a contractual assignment in Virginia with his Indian IT employer, Lila decided to join him on the H-4 visa. In Virginia, she looked into public and private universities for options to complete an undergraduate program. The costs were beyond what she had budgeted and could afford to pay. Within a year, Siva had to move to Atlanta. Again, Lila visited various colleges and universities to find a path to a bachelor's degree. She finally decided that going back to India for a bachelor's might be a better option. However, no one in her family supported her decision, including her mother and husband. Instead, her in-laws and family wished that she first have children and then maybe consider coming to India for studies. Yet another option that Lila considered was to apply for a distance program in India. However, most of these programs required students to be present periodically on campus, which was difficult in

her case. Towards the end of the study, Lila's younger sister (married to Siva's younger brother) had just had a child, which meant that the pressure was greater on Lila to place her plans for studies on hold.

Lila viewed her marriage to Siva as a step-up socially for not just her but for her family. Indeed, Siva, being much older than her and more educated than her, was the strongest influence in Lila's life. She turned to him for all her decisions about further education and with regard to what she could do while being a dependent immigrant. Throughout the study, Lila described struggling to make peace with her ambitions to pursue higher education and her in-laws' expectations that the couple have children soon.

Besides the five focal participants, I conducted interviews with seven others. Riya referred her friends and former neighbors, Diya, Asha and Mili, to the study. All three were about the same age as Riya and had school-going children. Diya, from Pune, had a master's degree in computer systems management and had worked briefly before and after marriage in IT. Asha, also from Pune, was an architect who had worked before marriage in an architectural firm in India. Mili, from a small town in the state of Karnataka, had studied law and practiced briefly before marriage. Similar to Riya, none expressed great concern about their dependent immigrant status, which lasted more than a decade in Diya's case. Their children's education occupied them entirely and they all stated a need to greatly update their skills, which they thought were outdated at this stage.

I met Tara through an online discussion forum where she had posted about a meeting for dependent immigrant women in Atlanta. When she heard about my study,

Tara expressed interest in being a part of it. Tara was from Pune as well and had a master's degree in journalism from England. She had an arrangement to continue working remotely from Atlanta for her Indian employer, an educational consulting firm that placed Indian students at universities around the world. Tara was passionate about her work, but also aware that she was treading a gray area, since all forms of employment were prohibited for H-4 visa holders. I attributed her reluctance to meet other participants during a group interview to this apprehension on her part about her work. But, she also stated frequently that she did not see herself as part of the “potluck group” of immigrant wives. Through her work, she was independent of her husband, Farhan, and also travelled alone twice a year to India and other countries for work and leisure.

My partner's cousin in Atlanta also agreed to be interviewed. Radha, an engineer, had been on the H-4 visa for four years before transitioning to a green card eight years ago. She now worked in the same IT specialization as her husband, after learning the software skills from her husband. This was not uncommon among H-1B/H-4 couples – the husband often taught the wife IT skills even if she was not from a tech background. Once they obtain a green card, both work in similar fields in IT.

I also interviewed Hari, the only male participant in the group who was on the H-4 visa. Nisha knew Hari through her daycare service. Hari was a software engineer with about a decade of experience. He had worked on projects previously around the U.S. but had trouble lately finding a H-1B sponsor. His wife, Veena, also in IT, had a H-1B visa for the last three years, which allowed Hari to stay in the U.S. as her dependent. They had an eight-year old son, Kiran. While Hari fulfilled a similar role as the mothers in the

study, taking Kiran to school and after-school activities and volunteering at the school, he rarely framed it in the same way as Riya, Diya or Asha did. Hari reiterated during our interviews that he was between H-1B applications or waiting to hear from a potential employer. The dependent immigrant status was just a stop-gap phase for him between finding H-1B jobs.

Lastly, I also interviewed Rashi Bhatnagar, an activist whose Facebook page is popular among dependent immigrants for updates about immigration reform. Rashi had recently relocated to Atlanta from Illinois. She had a master's in journalism from Delhi where she had worked for a major publishing house before migration to the U.S. Rashi described her activist efforts as being part of her volunteering as a dependent immigrant.

Resisting Typology

Midway through fieldwork, data seemed to show a typology of participants as mothers and newly weds. But this typology was all too simplistic and appeared to suggest that motherhood channeled the career and educational aspirations of dependent immigrant women into reproductive labor. Besides, the typology did not hold – Rashi, the H-4 activist was also the mother of a two-year old, and there were important differences between the younger participants, the newly weds, in how they dealt with their dependent immigrant status. Behar (1990) critiques the anthropological imperative to typify individual life-stories of informants in attempts to theorize the cultural or social worlds that they inhabit. Like Tedlock (1991), Behar advocates instead switching the focus of ethnographic writing from representation of the narrator to the self-construction of the subject in her narrative, “to see her not as a type but as she sees herself, as an actor thrust

in the world seeking to gain meaning out of the events of her life” (p. 229). Hence, I decided not to make a typology the focus of analysis, but rather to analyze individual narratives for their uniqueness. In doing this, I found threads of commonality that crisscrossed the “types.” I have described these analytical threads in the next two chapters on study findings.

Chapter 5: The Subjection of Dependence

Introduction

This study uses the CNA method that brings a CDA approach to narrative analysis (Souto-Manning, 2014). CDA is critical of normalized discourses that create and maintain social inequities (Fairclough, 1989; Wodak, 2001). Narrative analysis, meanwhile, is focused on the linguistic and semiotic world of assigning meaning to experiences through stories (Bruner, 1990). CNA brings these two approaches together and seeks to understand what is critical for the individual narrator. It examines the dual process of institutional discourses seeping into (and colonizing) everyday discourse, alongside the appropriation of these discourses in everyday narratives.

Souto-Manning's (2014) CNA studies involved a Freirean culture circle setting where narrators deliberately questioned what they considered as problematic institutional discourses, in order to raise critical meta-awareness (Freire, 1970). In the present study, data were examined to highlight the intertextuality of problematic macro discourses in participant narratives. At the same time, the analysis identified narrative moments that problematize and appropriate these discourses. A CNA approach is in keeping with the theoretical framework of the study where the discursive processes of "being made" and "self-making" are seen as simultaneous in the construction of dependent, *educated* and gendered subjectivities.

In the narratives gathered in this study, I sought to identify recurring themes that at times, though not always, also resonated with my former experiences as a dependent immigrant. I looked at each interview to see how participants assumed an *educated*

subjectivity and how they were able to leverage it, both within and against their dependent situation. Using CNA and the framework of subject-ification (Foucault, 1980; Ong, 1996), I discuss the themes and findings related to each research question. While I discuss findings as themes, I have also drawn on longer individual narratives to illustrate each of these common narrative threads.

First, in this chapter, I discuss the set of themes about the *being made* aspect of or of subjection through dependence. These findings underscore how the state-market-familial apparatus of dependent migration shapes gendered immigrant subjects. The *being made* process is evident in uncritical narrative statements about the dependent condition. These utterances subscribe to and transmit neoliberal and gendered discourses on dependence. Next, in the following chapter, the self-making themes illustrate narrative moments where as narrators, participants display critical awareness of their condition and deploy specific strategies to appropriate an *educated* dependent subjectivity for themselves. This *educated* subjectivity, I propose, acts as leverage against a purely “dependent” subjectivity. Throughout, the role of diasporic physical and virtual spaces are considered in both shaping and offering a space for self-expression to these immigrant women.

Educated-but-Dependent

Immigration policy operates from certain assumptions about the diverse categories of immigrants that it seeks to regulate. For H-1B workers, these assumptions define them as “high-skilled,” “temporary aliens” or “non-immigrants.” This broad characterization overlooks the fact that most H-1B workers seek job opportunities in the U.S. as a pathway to migration (applying for permanent residency and citizenship), rather

than returning to India after completing a project. These “temporary workers” try to extend their stay through visa renewals for a decade or more, while their permanent residence papers are being processed.

For dependent immigrant women, such assumptions are of a different, gendered nature. Policy overlooks the fact that while techworkers possess education and skills to perform “specialized jobs” in the country, their spouses may be just as qualified, if not more in some cases. Recent reform that addressed the condition of dependent immigrants gave evidence of the broad brush used by immigration policy. I discussed this latest reform with Tara one day, as it granted a limited number of work permits to dependent immigrants. But Tara spoke instead of how the reform in itself was a reminder of her dependent condition, lest she forget. She spelled out these assumptions about dependent immigrants thus:

Major thing with the new work permit rule is that your husband needs to meet certain criteria of being here long enough. Farhan does not qualify for that right now. So that’s the thing. It is not up to me, it’s based on my *husband*. Eligibility is not based on who I am. It’s based on how long my husband’s been here. So once again it comes down to depending on your spouse. I wish they had in there certain factors of the H-4 person’s qualifications. You know, what degree do you have, how many years of work experience, what industry. If I give them all this information and still don’t qualify, I would not feel *that* frustrated. But because your husband has not been here long enough, now *that’s* a different thing. (Tara, July 2015, italics indicate narrator’s emphasis)

Tara found that the latest reform underscores her dependence on her techworker partner – unless the partner fulfills certain work and migration criteria, dependent immigrant women do not qualify for work permits, though they may possess higher education and training just as much as their partner does, as indeed was Tara’s case. In other ways too, policy reminds these immigrant women that they are legally bound to their H-1B partners. So, dependent immigration policy overlaps market and familial discourses about the female-homemaker-caregiver/male-breadwinner that inevitably accrue to the gendered dependent condition. These broader discourses were frequently echoed in narratives through the following: the construct of “sitting at home,” the governmentality of uncertainty, certain notions about neoliberal education, and the cultural construct of “mindset” or “mentality.”

“Sitting at Home”

The “lock.”

People come on H-4 then take about five years to get a green card and work permit. But then they get a lot of commitments, they have children. They think at first that in those five years, I can have children and they will grow up a bit and then I can start my career. But once the five years pass, they get the thought that my life is ok like this. I can take care of kids and family and just be. So their mind changes totally. Now Americans allow H-1Bs to work but they stop their spouses. These spouses may have a basic degree or a higher degree, even a doctorate. Those who have studied a lot will definitely feel it a lot because they will want to do something after. Those who have studied less with just a bachelor’s degree

may be ok with it thinking I have kids and family, that's enough for me. But even they, if they feel, let me mingle in society and do something, that's when they have the five-year lock. The way they are locked in for five years is that their minds don't change. This is the logic. So they lock the spouses just enough to make sure they don't work. Even then some women are really motivated, and think, its ok if I give my earnings to the babysitter. I will satisfy my curiosity with my career. That I won't get by sitting at home. (Maya, September 2015)

Maya was on a weekend visit to see me, along with her husband, Krishna. It was the morning after their arrival and I had suggested we step out into the yard, get some fresh air and also try to record. Maya sat cross-legged on the floor of the patio while I sat down with her on the edge of the patio wall. She asked me how data collection was going and I said it was going well. What was I finding, she asked (as did many others often during the study). I told her that some of those who had come five to eight years ago had not expressed the urgency for change as she and the more recent arrivals had. This is when Maya explained her theory about the H-4 “lock” and ensuing change of mind. “Lock” perfectly expressed one aspect of the experience of gendered dependent migration – the sense of being caught in marriage, migration and market with no visible pathway to furthering one's educational and career aspirations.

From the first time we spoke, Maya had expressed how the need to “do something” other than “sit at home” had been eating away at her. She had a master's degree in biotechnology and had graduated at the top of her class in an engineering institute in the state of Tamil Nadu. On numerous occasions – over skype interviews,

while chatting on the couch in her living room or over lunch at an Indian restaurant – she had expressed the same need not to “sit at home” after marriage. She expressed it most clearly in the excerpt above where she gives voice to the large numbers of women like herself who were dependent immigrants but were motivated not to “sit at home.”

Maya gives voice in her narrative to the collective of H-4 women and their thought processes after migration as dependents. Her collective narrative, however, frames dependent immigrant women as objects of larger socio-political systems. Their attempts at assuming active subject positions are repeatedly thwarted and re-shaped by these systems. They “get commitments” and therefore change their plans. They settle into their passive condition (“get the thought,” “ok like this” and “just be”). Maya sees these women’s level of education as a catalyst to creating a need to “do something.” Irrespective of their level of education, they may also have the desire to be active members of society. But again, their move towards active subjecthood is thwarted by a “lock.” Indeed, Maya goes as far as to suggest that the policy rationale for the “lock” is to immobilize them to the point that their “minds don’t change.”

The ray of hope in Maya’s narrative comes at the end of the excerpt where women’s own motivation and curiosity could potentially lead them to become active subjects. But this potential subjecthood comes at a price – literally giving away all one’s earnings towards childcare. Mothers in the study, like Diya and Asha, also echoed Maya’s final thought about the net financial result of employment, when all their earnings would inevitably go towards daycare services. But in the frame of Maya’s collective narrative, this is literally the price dependent immigrant women must pay in order to

assume individuality and become active subjects. Furthermore, Maya echoes the “doing nothingness” of the dependent condition, written into policy and readily available as the gendered social script of the “homemaker.” She is dismissive of those who sit at home too many years, engaged in childcare. Indeed, she sees dependents as located on the periphery of society and yearning to become active, neoliberally productive members. Interestingly, the only active subjects in Maya’s narrative are “Americans” who “allow,” “stop,” “lock” and “make sure.” This noun stands in lieu of “government” but also references the nativist sentiment that underlies restrictive immigration policies.

Like for Maya, “sitting at home” had goaded me endlessly as a dependent immigrant. I wondered if all my learning, thinking, exploring and debating were somehow meant to prepare me for “sitting at home.” I felt betrayed and guilty at the same time. Betrayed by forces and systems where I felt caught, and guilty that I could not be productive after years of education. Was my decade of training and higher education meant just to bring the right amount of taste to our home? Was all my reading meant to help me make interesting conversation with guests? And how could I denounce this tame-educated-sitting-at-home role of an immigrant wife? By making uninteresting conversation? With poor décor? The guilt, shame and conflict of “sitting at home” stayed with me right to the day I began preparing to apply for a doctoral program.

The double-bind – being educated and married. Interestingly, in Indian languages, the term “sitting at home” connotes a gain in status. In Hindi for instance, the widely used phrase “*ghar pe baithke raj karna*” literally means “to sit at home and rule over the house.” The idiom is widely used for the married daughter or daughters-in-law

of a house. But, for women with higher education, this post-marriage gain in status comes with an important caveat. It is inscribed within the patriarchal model of educating women for marriage – educate a girl well, so she can marry well and live well⁹. In other words, educate her so she can sit at home and not have to seek employment but still be respected at home. In fact, the tension that was evident in many participants’ descriptions of “sitting at home” stemmed, like for me, from the recognition of being assigned a passive and implied non-productive homemaker/caregiver role, often by someone judging from outside the home. This tension was evident when Riya, a zoology graduate and mother of two girls, Raaga in college and Alisha in middle school, narrated an incident when she was called to explain her “sitting at home,” this time by an older woman in her friends network.

I had absolutely no idea about H-4 before migration. I didn't know. I only knew H-4 is a dependent visa and I knew I was not allowed to work. That much I knew. I didn't think about it that much at that time because working didn't cross my mind back then. Alisha was only six months old. Working came to my mind only when she was in third grade and more independent. Only when people would say, oh what do you do, then it used to feel, ok I should think about working. And people don't ask it in a very nice way. I had a friend's mother-in-law ask me. She has been a stay-at-home mom throughout her life, but because her daughter-in-

⁹ Jeffery and Jeffery (1994) describe such tagging of girls’ education to their marriage marketability in rural Uttar Pradesh. But education-for-marriage is widely practiced across the class and regional spectrum of India and the belief particularly resonates among immigrant Indians (Dasgupta & Warrier, 1996).

law is working, she asked me, oh so what do you do at home all day. I was so fed up of listening to this. I said, aunty you should know [*incredulous tone*]! You have been a stay-at-home mom throughout your life right? I mean, there's a limit right! (Riya, July 2015)

Riya begins her narrative more promisingly than Maya did. She is clear about knowing where she stood with the H-4 visa. She assumes motherhood and the caregiver role entirely. But then she surrenders agency – motherhood and “people” determine when she becomes a productive subject. The double bind of marriage-market in the lives of dependent immigrant women is underscored in Riya’s narrative when we consider the questioner, the friend’s mother-in-law. She gained her power to pose the question to Riya from a marriage-based link to market productivity, through her working daughter-in-law, as well as the cultural authority that accrues to elders in the family. Else, she had little authority to pose the question. Significantly, Riya’s narrative repeats “know” five times – the first four referring to her knowledge and awareness of the dependent condition and the last referring to the questioner’s shared knowledge of “sitting at home.” But this knowledge proves ineffective to counter the trope of doing nothing all day at home.

Countless other such episodes are the subtext to Riya’s expressions about being “fed up of listening to this” and “there’s a limit.” In multiple ways, social media contribute to making dependent immigrant women susceptible to this line of questioning, since these spaces are an extension of diasporic space. Family and friends are constantly present on these apps and pages. So, one is called to be responsive to questions, for instance about what one does all day at home in the U.S. Why are you not working yet?

Why are you not doing something yet? Tara, a graduate in media and communication, was herself an active and savvy social media user. Yet, she too felt that she was called to be answerable to friends and even acquaintances who knew little about her current situation. Though Tara knew she was not eligible for a work permit yet, her social media contacts would not cease forwarding her news about the revised work permit rule, declaring that she could work now. Tara said she resigned not to reply to these comments, not knowing where to begin explaining the minutiae of immigration regulations to her friends.

In the year that I spent as a dependent immigrant, I too was struck by the centrality of the question “what do you do” in American and Indian diasporic small talk. At any social gathering, I dreaded the pesky little question. It made a well of desperation surge as I tried to explain dependent migration and the fact that I had an education but could do nothing with it at the moment. Eventually, I settled on answering, “Nothing,” giving in to the trope of “sitting at home.”

Family/market discursive overlap. Back in India, questions about the immigrant wife who lives in the U.S. and only “sits at home” have of late assumed neoliberal significance. As increasing numbers of middle-class women in India join the workforce, an Indian NRI woman, not using her dollar-earning potential, is made answerable for her presumed non-productivity, as was Riya by her friend’s mother-in-law. Lila, the youngest participant, also became easy target for what she described as jealousy from her extended family (uncles, aunts, cousins). They would let her know, for instance, that she may be

living in America, but that all she did was “stay all day in the kitchen and cook,” as opposed to studying or working or being otherwise productive.

Moreover, when Lila visited India for her sister’s wedding, the extended family used a Tamil term *vazha veti* to describe her. When she mentioned this term to me, Lila apologized for using “bad words.” *Vazha veti* is a pejorative term in colloquial Tamil used to describe a woman who is separated from her husband and has to return to her maternal home. The literal meaning of the term is “one who is not doing anything with their life.” While *veti* is a gender-neutral word to refer to “not doing anything,” *vazha veti* has a gendered connotation. It denotes a woman who has lost her marital status and therefore presumably her economic support. For Lila, the affront touched her on multiple levels – it implied that she had no means of support but for her husband, and that she risked loss of marital status as a result of not finding employment on migration. The term denied her any form of independent subjecthood.

Lila’s anecdote had described the perfect overlap of patriarchal systems in the lives of dependent immigrant women whereby one sanctions the other. Familial and marriage-based patriarchal discourse overlaps state and market-imposed unemployment. This overlay of discourses was evident as well for Gita, an accounting graduate and mother of two children, Pia in pre-K and Ayush in middle school. One episode in particular stands out when Gita mentioned that she had previously considered volunteering at her daughter Pia’s school:

The other day, I just asked my husband, should I go volunteer. I could volunteer even in Pia’s school. It is close by, I can go by walk. I don’t know driving, I can’t

drive, so that is the problem. I am dependent here totally on my husband for everything I need. So I was asking him, should I go volunteer in Pia's school. He said but they don't *pay* for it. I said [*laughs*] it is volunteering, they are not supposed to pay. So he said, why go, sit at home, enjoy! [*long laughter*] That's what he said. (Gita, October 2015)

From the outset of the narrative, Gita sets herself as a passive object, waiting for external authorization for action. She explicitly names her passive role ("dependent here totally"). Her husband, Shri, whom she has vested with all the authority in this narrative, first assesses the market value of her proposed action – "they don't pay for it." So Gita counters with common sense, volunteering is generally unpaid. To this, Shri answers with market-based logic that her potential action is pointless. Volunteering and being engaged in one's community does not count in this neoliberal patriarchal calculation of the gendered subject. Shri further ascribes a derisive quality to the "sitting at home" trope, derision that Gita wholly assumes as she laughs at his comment. It is problematic that any such comment about "sitting at home" directed at dependent immigrant women is legitimated by state-imposed dependence and the temporary inability to enact productivity through the market. Soon after narrating the episode, Gita hastened to mention that her husband would surely support her if she were to insist on studying or were to seek out a job. She thus internalized the construct of "sitting at home."

Internalization. Internalization of the construct of "sitting at home" was evident for others as well in their descriptions of their current situation. For Nisha, an IT engineer from Bangalore, moving to the U.S. as a dependent meant a welcome break from her

career. She had worked at her IT job till the eve of her departure. So she spent the first few months on arrival exploring Atlanta. Then, as she and Akash had planned, Nisha applied for a H-1B visa, hoping to find an IT job similar to the one Akash held. However, the chances for an individual to be approved for a H-1B in the annual lottery system¹⁰ are very limited. Nisha was not selected for a H-1B. But this did not deter her and she re-applied the following year. When I first met Nisha, she had just learned that for a second year, she was unlikely to get the H-1B or an IT job in the U.S. Explaining the working of H-1B and IT projects to me, Nisha went into hypotheticals:

I'm not very worried even if I get an IT consultancy job. I don't think the work will get over my head. I'm ready to face it. I'm ready to balance it even if the work interferes with my personal life. I'm sure I can balance both. Maybe have a little bit less fun and do more work for a few days 'cause I've already had a lot of fun sitting at home. (Nisha, July 2015)

Nisha had always seemed confident and clear in her plans. So I was not surprised when she described how she would balance the busy life of a consultant with her family life. But, her final comment uncritically assumes the problematic construction of “sitting at home,” which she holds in contrast to a busy and productive life. She makes active, affirmative statements throughout to position herself as a neoliberal subject “ready” for market productivity. She is a gendered neoliberal subject who separates and manages her work and personal lives (prior to the excerpt, she had also discussed how women face

¹⁰ H-1B lottery – since the number of new H-1B visas approved in the general category each year is capped at 65,000 and the number of applications is three times this figure (236,000 in 2016 [USCIS, 2016]), USCIS uses a computer-based random selection or lottery system to select applicants for approval after an initial screening process.

specific work-life balance issues with IT consulting work). So, one interpretation of “having a lot of fun” while “sitting at home” here could be that it is an expression of individualist and consumerist agency exercised by the gendered neoliberal subject. But, at a time when Nisha was working hard to apply for a H-1B visa and job, the comment signifies instead a degree of internalization of guilt at being a non-productive neoliberal subject. In effect, Nisha’s comment in this latter scenario is closer to Shri’s “sit at home, enjoy” whereby she internalized the derision and resultant guilt of the construct.

Making the case for combining narrative analysis with CDA, Souto-Manning (2014) argues that “a discourse is only powerful when it is recycled in stories everyday people tell” (p. 163). As immigrants with educational qualifications, dependent immigrant women are called to be answerable to the discourse of “sitting at home” and produced as marginalized “dependents” in a neoliberal patriarchal calculation. The construct of “sitting at home” is operationalized through a period of state-imposed unemployment. Then, the double-bind of being married and educated calls into question these immigrant women’s non-productivity, given their location in the “land of opportunities.” The paradox here is that despite being highly educated and married, which is the norm among the Indian middle classes, the dependent immigrant status makes these women vulnerable to questions about their non-productive status. Further, the construct of “sitting at home” seeps into daily discourses where patriarchal and neoliberal logic tend to overlap, and shapes these women as marginalized neoliberal subjects. Lastly, the construct is internalized in women’s narratives through guilt about their situation.

The Governmentality of Precarity

Since the majority of their work is project-based, techworker immigrants lead uncertain lives. Typically, projects last an arbitrary period, anywhere from three months to three years. Employers have the power to terminate a project at any time, stating dissatisfaction with the progress of work. For the techworker and his family, this means that, from the moment they relocate to the U.S., they are uncertain about how long they will remain in the country or in a particular location. Even if the H-1B worker is not a temporary consultant on a project but an employee of an Indian or a U.S. company, it is again uncertain if his visa would be extended beyond the current duration. He may find himself without a job in less than a month and the family have to move back to India. This sense of precarity forms a distinct undertone to the lives of dependent immigrant women. It infuses a range of decisions with ambiguity, including about their further education and their children's education. Within the year and a half of the study, both Maya's and Gita's families first moved to the U.S. and then had a change in project and work location. Riya's family too had an arrangement whereby the techworker moved from project to project between different cities, while the family stayed in Atlanta.

Documents. Precarity was not only a result of project-based work but also of visa requirements that required constant renewals and travel to India for visa stamping procedures. Riya, Diya and Mili among others had stories about traveling to India in order to sort complicated visa paperwork. Further, consular interviews require dependent immigrants to go unaccompanied or with their children for H-4 visa interviews. So there were stories of mothers who had travelled alone with their children to a nearby Indian

city that had consular services unlike their hometowns, even as their husbands were at work in the U.S.

I clearly remember the long, winding lines that formed at the break of dawn outside the U.S. consular office in Chennai. Soon after my wedding in Coimbatore, a city in the same state but with no consular services, I too waited in line in Chennai with our carefully selected wedding album, my partner's employment letter, his pay slips, his bank statements, all held together in a binder. There was the mandatory security check. Then came the lines leading to the counters of the consular officers. My officer was a middle-aged white man wearing thick eyeglasses. There was no expression on his face. I wavered between having a strict, grave look to acknowledge the power he truly held at that moment, and being at ease, leaning on the counter. He asked what does your husband do in the U.S.? That was an easy one – agricultural research. What kind of research (he laid an uneasy degree of stress on the word “research” stretching it out “re-search”)? He studies insects in crops, an entomologist. What kinds of crops, he asked. I knew but almost went blank. Potatoes! My voice shook a bit. Idaho equals potatoes, my partner had said. The officer appeared unmoved. He looked very briefly and blankly at me, stamped something on the papers. He returned my binder saying your passport will be ready in a day. That was it? Nothing about my education, decision to move from Canada to the U.S. after marriage, my degrees in India and Canada. Whoever “I” was did not seem to matter for this interview. As I walked out, I was numb but knew from all my weeks of reading online forums that it was not a visa denial. At the time, I could not see beyond that stamp

in my passport. Nor did I understand how the officer's questions held deeper meaning for my stay as a "dependent."

Documents are primordial, they are powerful. Through documents, the precarity of their immigration status operates as a powerful discourse in the lives of dependent immigrants. Before Tara's trip to India, she confessed to me that she had been obsessively checking her visa stamping to make sure it was valid for her return to the U.S. I looked at her documents and they were clearly valid for a year at least. Despite my repeated assurances that her papers were in order, Tara reiterated that she would be taking a thick binder of every document that had ever been filed for her and her partner's visas. She did this for every trip, she said. She did not want to be held back in India, unable to return to her husband in the U.S. Tara's fears were driven by a previous episode of being denied a tourist visa to the U.S. before marriage, when she had applied to come meet her then fiancé. Her fears were the result of an omnipresent trail of visa procedures and documents that govern the lives of techworkers and their families.

Similar to Tara, Mili, a law graduate and mother of a daughter in middle school, described an incident during Hurricane Sandy, when the family was based in New Jersey. They had booked a trip to India and Mili described how she had to get all their passports out of the bank safety box at a time when all the banks were closed from the storm. Mili's story made me realize that for my partner and me as well, our most important possessions were our passports – the Indian ones with all our visa stampings when we first came and our new American ones. They are always kept in a box with a pass code, along with all

our degree certificates, his graduation coat and binders of visa documents attesting to us being “legal aliens,” including the binder I had held tightly that morning in Chennai.

The “denial letter.” The specific modality by which the governmentality of documents operates in the lives of H-1Bs and their families, involves an alphabet soup of documents such as I-797, I-140, etc. These documents are often required at a later stage when the “legal alien” applies for permanent residence and then citizenship. One such document figured repeatedly in many narratives. Since dependent immigrants are not granted social security numbers, they must follow an additional step to obtain a driver’s license. The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) requires that they go to the Social Security Administration (SSA) in order to obtain a document officially known as the “denial of SSN letter.” Since DMV rules vary from state to state, some like Lila, realize the need for this procedure only when they arrive at the DMV to apply for a driver’s license. At the DMV, they are first asked for a SSN since DMV officials are unaware of their immigration category. On offering an explanation that they do not have a SSN but are documented, they are told to go to the SSA and obtain a “denial letter.” Thus, the procedure for obtaining this letter and the letter itself demarcate certain unbreachable limits for dependent immigrant women; they can never cross these limits from their location on the margins of the U.S. socio-economic system. Similar to the governmentality of other documents, this letter too is an instrument that ensures subscription to the marginal dependent discourse by these immigrant women – they cannot obtain a license to drive (a basic requirement of American subjecthood) unless they acquiesce to their marginal position.

I too remember not quite grasping why, after a long wait, the lady at the DMV in our town was so peeved by my passport and visa papers. She looked them over, returned them to me and said she could do nothing with them. I *must* get a “denial letter.” So my partner and I found ourselves at the SSA in our town the following day. We waited, explained and obtained the letter. I took the document back to the DMV with a sense of ineptitude and the feeling of giving in to something more powerful than me. The letter affirmed in print that, unlike countless others around me, including my partner, I could lay no claim to a number that signified legal and economic belonging in this country.

Precarious educational pathways. Besides uncertainty of belonging, work and visa-based precarity alters the educational pathways of dependent immigrant women. When I first met Maya, she was determined to find work based on her master’s degree in biotechnology. But she hesitated about her next step since she was not sure if the couple would still be in Georgia the following year, or if Krishna’s project would end that year. Maya had discovered that the University of Georgia was not far from their home. So she prepared to apply for a Ph.D. program there. She took the international graduate entrance exams, all the while unsure if she would have to move before completing the application process. Maya worried that she would obtain doctoral admission only to have to tell her department that she had to leave the following year. Krishna was supportive of her decision to apply for a doctoral program. Still, within eight months of their arrival, there was talk at Krishna’s work about the project ending ahead of schedule and people being let go or moved to the head office in Connecticut. In the midst of this uncertainty, Maya wrote her exams and submitted her application. A little over a year after they had first

arrived, as his teammates dispersed and found other opportunities, Krishna too found a project in California. Before she left, Maya was cautiously optimistic about her chances to pursue further education. She had looked up and found a university not too far from their new location.

Throughout the writing of the entrance exams and the application process, Maya would repeat, “I don’t know what is going to happen. Nothing is certain.” She was referring to their future, whether the couple would have to move back to India or to a different location in the U.S. in the next month or two. The uncertainty was reflected in her tone and her inability to move ahead with her educational goals. Krishna’s assurances that they would continue living in Georgia if she obtained graduate admission, did little to calm her since she was witness to the uncertainty and stress at his work. Whether they are voluntarily or involuntarily displaced through migration, immigrants seek to consolidate and build stability after migration. Without doubt, the stability of my partner’s work enabled me to pursue a doctoral program so far from “home.” So when Maya spoke of seeking graduate programs close to Krishna’s work place, I chalked it down to this need for stability that characterizes all immigrant life.

This section on the governmentality of precarity sought to understand how visa and work-based uncertainty shapes the lives of dependent immigrant women. Visa procedures underscore the fact that the lead migrant is the techworker partner, whose skills hold neoliberal value. Additionally, the uncertainty of IT work has the effect of sealing these immigrant women’s state of dependence as many of them move around the country with their partners for better work opportunities. So, on the one hand,

complicated visa procedures seem to recognize the *educated* part of the women's subjectivity and require knowledge of the technicalities of their partner's neoliberal skill set. On the other hand, market-based uncertainty and the governmentality of precarity maintain the women in a state of extended dependence; they move with their partners from place to place, unable to give roots to their aspirations as educated immigrant subjects.

Neoliberal Conceptions of Higher Education

Costs and returns. H-4 visa holders are legally allowed to pursue higher education. In fact, they are also eligible for in-state tuition rates if they are residents of their state. But, unlike all other categories of students in the U.S., they are not eligible for assistantships or work-study of any kind. So, in order to pursue higher education, most H-4 visa holders prefer switching to a F-1 or international student visa. This makes them eligible for assistantships and a limited number of on-campus work opportunities. The F-1 visa has another advantage, unavailable to H-4 visa holders: on obtaining their degree, F-1 holders can seek employment through a year-long Optional Practical Training program or OPT.

Georgia Tech had a M.S. program in IT but I need a master's from India to be eligible. I had budgeted twenty thousand dollars for a master's. Then if I get OPT, it is easier to get a H-1B. Even if I can work one year in the U.S. after studies, it's enough, I can make savings and return to India. I will have U.S. work experience and a master's also. So obviously I will get a job in India. They will pay me more too. But Georgia Tech said forty-one thousand dollars, it was too big an amount.

Then I tried a few universities like University of Phoenix and Herzing. They are small universities that offer online courses. But they said they won't give a student an F-1 visa. So I didn't see a point. Why spend twenty thousand dollars and get no OPT, no F-1 visa, no H-1B visa. There's nothing happening there but I'm still taking a loan and on what faith? How will I return it? Now the sixty percent chances of getting an H-1B is reduced to forty-five. That's why I didn't feel it was apt. If they would have given me an F-1 visa, I had no issue doing an online course also. Finally, end of the day what I want is the OPT so that I can start working. (Nisha, July 2015)

Prior to migration, Nisha was motivated to pursue higher education in the U.S. In fact, despite feeling the need to repay an outstanding loan for her wedding in India, Nisha had considered pursuing a master's degree in the U.S. as it would enhance her long-term earning potential. Before her marriage, she had taken the GRE and TOEFL exams in India, but did not score well on one of the tests. Her educational consulting firm in Bangalore had suggested that she pay for additional coaching classes to assure her admission to a M.S. program. But Nisha was reluctant to spend her father's money on her education. She could not secure admission with her test scores. Instead, she found employment at a top IT firm in Bangalore. When she began work, Nisha discovered that on-the-job learning and experience mattered more in IT than theoretical knowledge or an additional degree. Therefore, when she did migrate to the U.S. with her husband, Akash, she preferred to apply for an H-1B in the annual lottery system, rather than seek a master's

degree. It was only when she could not get through the H-1B lottery and had to wait for a year to re-apply, that she re-considered doing a one-year master's program.

Neoliberal higher education shapes dependent immigrant women's subjectivities in specific ways. First, high costs of graduate education in India and the U.S. mean that the women have to assume student loans or rely on family resources to fulfill educational aspirations. Next, among the skilled professionals of middle-class India and its diaspora, particularly those in the field of IT, the pursuit of education is largely weighted towards marketable skills rather than personal interest. So, the steep costs of higher education in the U.S. mean that the women cannot justify educational expenses to their families, other than as a guaranteed pathway towards future H-1B-like jobs.

Nisha's description of looking for a master's program draws heavily on a cost-and-returns vocabulary. She assesses the value of the program based entirely on her financial investment and the subsequent growth in her earning potential, her market value. In the process, she makes no distinction between a public university and private ones. She also calculates the proportionate chances of getting a H-1B visa with or without a master's program which guarantees the OPT (sixty percent to forty-five percent). With her final statement, Nisha unquestioningly upholds the neoliberal view of higher education. It was not surprising then that later in the study, she chose to simply obtain a short-term Oracle certification in order to immediately update her skills for the market.

"A dead investment." Diya, who held a master's in computer systems management from India, was eligible to apply for a work permit after the latest immigration reform. Yet, Diya hesitated to file an application for the work permit, since

she felt that her skills needed updating. She explained to me how on-the-job training made more sense to her than a full-time program:

You *can* study as a dependent but if there are no jobs then what's the use of studying. They have just given H-4 people the opportunity to work. This justifies allowing you to study on H-4. And it's probably a good thing because if you study in a college, it makes a difference. You have the stamp of a college and probably if they have campus interviews and if you are lucky enough, you can get a job. So the job hunting process can be reduced or cut down. Now, if you have to apply for a work permit as a H-4, it's a three hundred and fifty dollar fee. Obviously you think you are investing and you want some returns out of it. But then what if I don't get anything in my hand. So always there's this thing, will it be a dead investment? I have not thought of doing a master's. Just a part-time diploma course maybe. When I said updating skills, it's more about having some tiny project that I can do by myself. There are a lot of companies started by Indians and employing Indians, that's what I've heard. So if I can get some tiny projects just for myself I can apply and experience it because just by reading something, it won't work. Unless I work and apply it somewhere especially in the technical field, then I can say that yes I know how this thing works. If I just read books that's not going to help. So what I mean [by updating skills] is doing the work myself. (Diya, August 2015)

Diya echoes here much of Nisha's characterization of pursuing formal higher education. She affirms an even deeper neoliberal stance on the topic than Nisha, calling formal

educational investment a potentially “dead” one. She grants the path of higher education some leeway if it were to lead to a job through campus recruitment. But her assessment of the promise of education is littered with a series of “probably” and “if” clauses.

Indeed, Diya rationalizes that pursuing formal education would only make sense for dependent immigrants in conjunction with the work permit. Such notions about learning and updating skills are not unusual for those working in IT. The field requires constant refreshing of skills, particularly by working on newer and more challenging projects. Still, it is the second half of Diya’s rationale for her skepticism that clearly marks her recycling of the neoliberal discourse on education. Speaking of updating her skills, she assumes full responsibility for her learning. It is she and she alone who can learn by doing rather than by just reading books. This is still not an unsalvageable position on learning and education. It prioritizes a market and work-based approach to learning by doing. However, when we consider that for most dependent immigrants, there is a very narrow window to access such work-based learning, Diya’s views lead them to a dead end. In many ways, Diya’s take on formal education maintains her condition of stasis, unable to pursue education or make a move out of her current situation.

Trivia.

I feel now so what if I don’t study. I can still gain a lot of knowledge. My husband said that once we get the green card, I can work. So I’m just gaining knowledge now. He tells me to look up different subjects and I read about them and improve my knowledge. Bachelor’s is just a certificate, so I’m not worried about it since there’s no way for me to study now. He told me to read about software testing and

I tried to learn about the topic. I learned to change car tags, do groceries on the weekend by myself, run other errands. So it's like a daily exercise for me. With friends and neighbors too I discuss general knowledge topics, cooking, baking cakes, current events. (Lila, December 2016)

After months of expressing her strong desire and ambition to complete a master's program in the U.S., Lila settled for the position she expresses in this excerpt. I had seen the phases of change in her stance on pursuing higher education – from actively seeking formal bachelor's and master's programs, to settling for the possibility of a distance program in India, then to considering a short-term software course, and finally settling for the piecemeal knowledge gathering that she describes above. I knew that her desire to pursue formal education was repeatedly thwarted by family objections and pressures. But I was still not ready for Lila's stance about practical learning for daily tasks to the exclusion of all else. As she describes it, she had become a passive vault of information that her husband appeared to direct towards this or that task. In fact, many dependent immigrant women do learn testing skills from their techworker partner so that they can eventually obtain a job in quality assessment (QA) or testing, an entry level IT job with little possibility of career growth compared to the jobs held by most techworkers.

Throughout the study, I was in deep disagreement with these views and discourses on higher education. In India and as an immigrant, I had always held firm to my belief in formal education. But this faith was not always a given, it was nurtured and supported financially and emotionally by family, and pegged on models such as distant aunts and cousins who had reaped the long-term benefits of higher education. While in

Lila's case her views about education were clearly influenced by her husband's work and his perspective, for Nisha and Diya their own work experience dictated espousing formal education in favor of work-based and investment-based education. It was not easy to negotiate this difference of views during the study. I could hear their skepticism in periodic questions about, "So what have you found so far?" which I decided to turn into a validity process. Or again, the instance when Tara said that everyone seems to be doing a PhD, so she should also probably consider doing it since she had so much time on hand. Or again, when Diya said that maybe she should do research since it seems like an easy thing to do with her dependent status. I was able to field these comments as I had experience dealing with jibes about my endless formal education with extended family in India. Obtaining a job even before the completion of a degree is the only way to convince middle-class India about the utility of higher education. Still, I knew that the privilege of having a green card also clouded my assessment of the promise of higher education as an immigrant. Had I relied on getting a H-1B sponsor after my graduate studies, I might have held views similar to Nisha and Diya.

It is clear that there are specific ways in which neoliberal discourse on higher education conditions the educational pathways of dependent immigrant women. In uncritically embracing this discourse, they incrementally write themselves into positions of non-productive, obsolete, neoliberal subjects, as did Nisha, Diya and Lila. Assuming full responsibility for their condition further rules out any possibility of altering it in the near future.

“Mindset” and “Mentality”

Gender roles. As the study progressed, conversations often turned to the techworker partner, who appeared to be just as marked by dependent migration. The H-1B global labor market is described as an exploitative neoliberal system, where educated young men and women from India are produced as “bodies” in an arbitrary yet organized, state-sanctioned tech labor market (Banerjee, 2010). In my study, I found that H-1B workers had to balance neoliberal market/work expectations with familial ones, such as familial expectations of the U.S.-based techworker-son and son-in-law. In reference to their techworker partners, I would hear the same terms repeated in narratives: “mindset” and “mentality.” As Riya phrased it once:

We start at a place where husbands are already working, they are higher up in career, no way to compare, we will always be secondary. As for equality in marriage, people here Americans start careers early. They are not displaced like we are. But even in India now, career graph starts at the same time. So growth is equivalent. For us, we have to follow the husband. You have to start fresh with him each time. The younger generation mindset is such that couples are more adjusting to each other. Not in my time. I never asked for it either. Nowadays men are more flexible and women are stronger and more confident. (Riya, September 2015)

“Mindset” as used by Riya signifies the extent of conformity to gender stereotypes and roles, in this instance within a diasporic marriage. In her description of women from her generation (“we”), Riya fixes them in a passive mode of following their husbands as he

actively builds his career. She uses an obligatory verb (“have to”) for these women suggesting a larger compelling force – rigid gender roles or “mindset.” For younger couples, however, she underscores a change in “mindset.” She does this by switching their gendered adjectives (men are “flexible” and women “stronger” “confident”).

On a different occasion, Riya remarked that she had been a tomboy in school and an avid cricket player. Cricket is popularly seen and practiced as a male sport in India. Riya’s husband, Arun, was a cricket fan and also played the game when he had a chance with other Indian men in their Atlanta neighborhood. Riya remarked that Arun was not “wired to” recognize that she was knowledgeable in cricket and could appreciate it as much. Riya felt admiration for how girls in the U.S. are taught to push gender limits in sports. Yet, she felt that at her age (in her forties), expectations of an equal marriage required a change in “mindset.” By this, she meant a change in attitude on both her and her husband’s part, and on the part of a larger collective (in India and the diaspora) that saw women her age as following their husbands and their careers. On numerous other occasions as well, Riya stressed the rigidity of Arun’s subscription to the male provider role. For instance, with work keeping him away from home all week, Arun had not visited his older daughter’s schools, whereas Riya herself was actively engaged as a parent volunteer in their children’s schools.

Gender norms. Participants used “mentality” in a way that went beyond rigid gender roles alone. It served as a metonym for the gendered cultural norms that women comply with and may transmit to their children. Gita explained the patriarchal and cultural rationale contained in “mentality” thus:

They [husbands] will not oppose [wives studying/working] but these kinds of questions don't come to their mind. Their mind is filled with their own...I'm not saying they are selfish. Anybody in their place would behave the same way. Not blaming them but it is a mentality. It will be like that. Because we are Indians, it is said that somebody should be at home. The house will not be a home unless there is a woman in it. She has to give our culture, our tradition to our children. She should be there for them. When my husband was not there in Mumbai, *I* was there. He knows that. The other day we met our neighbors, an uncle and aunty from India, taking a stroll in the evening. They asked my husband, what do you do. He said I'm an IT consultant. And they asked me, what do you do, are you working? I said no, I am a housewife. My husband said quickly, somebody should be there at home to take care of the children. So the uncle said yes, it is also a job, it is also important. So [*laughs*] he [husband] made it like that. He doesn't make me feel like I am useless or I'm not getting a paycheck. So he says your job is also important, you should be there. [*laughs*] He makes it that way. (Gita, October 2015)

Gita explains the cultural norm contained in “mentality” that a woman ought to stay home and solely take care of home and children. In the absence of the techworker partner, who is busy with his career, her “job” was to be home and pass their tradition to the children. Among the four people present in this scene of an evening walk, it is interesting how the discussion about “what do you do” was largely asked and settled between the two men. But Gita focuses her narrative on the way Shri managed the

questioning of her social status and assigned her an “also important” role in their family through a neoliberal calculation (her “job”). This was a public acknowledgement by her husband of her role in the family. The fact that it was socially constructed with an older couple from India in the neighborhood, adds cultural weight and value to this line of thought, this “mindset.” Gita’s uncritical adoption of this discourse is evident when she rationalizes her husband’s stance (anybody else would think the same). She underscores the inevitability of the patriarchal cultural discourse (“it will be like that”). While she resurfaces as an active subject in the middle of the narrative (“*I was there*”), her action mattered only because “he knows that.” As the narrative progresses, Gita progressively fades into the background, till the evening walk scene where she, much like the older woman also present but never heard, let the men discuss and settle their relative importance.

For the only H-4 husband in the study, these gendered roles and norms applied differently. When Nisha introduced Hari to me at her apartment, I was struck by how amenable he was to any suggestions about interview time or even about where we would go for coffee that day (it was his birthday). But this assessment was quickly altered during our interviews. Hari’s narratives depicted someone who was between H-1Bs and currently down on his luck rather than someone dealing with the difficulties of being a dependent immigrant. In one instance, he clearly said, “I could not be on the H-4. So I had to look for H-1B recruitment consultants even before leaving India” (Hari, January 2016). Indeed, luck and fate played an important part in Hari’s narrative, be it in his having to return to India years ago after a project ended, or currently not being able to get

a H-1B job after two years of applications. He also used luck to characterize his wife's steadily growing career trajectory. Indeed, Hari repeatedly insisted that his was not an unusual case and that he knew many husbands who were currently on the H-4 visa in his neighborhood and his friends' network. I knew that statistics bore out otherwise and that the majority of H-4 visa holders were women from India. Though the male-breadwinner/female-homemaker roles were clearly reversed for Hari, his narrative never addressed this obvious reversal. He would insist for instance on the lack of stability at his wife's work or that he was more familiar with the field of IT and H-1B work than his wife, Veena, who was also an IT engineer. In fact, Veena would always demur to him for major career decisions. Finally, in answer to a direct question about his dependent status, Hari spoke of episodes when Veena would get "emotionally upset" about his condition. He marked this down to a general "ladies' mentality" to be too emotional.

Besides our differences with regard to education, it was this aspect of rigid gender roles that I found hard to negotiate during the study. I felt duplicitous at times agreeing with these stories about what men and women ought to be doing, but held back my thoughts all the same. On one occasion, I did get into a debate with Nisha when she spoke of the irrelevance of feminism in the Indian context. We were discussing an Indian debate show on the possibility of more "house husbands" in the country, hosted by a prominent feminist and media personality, Barkha Dutt. Nisha critiqued the "bias" displayed by Dutt, stating that as a host, she should not always simply support women. On further questioning, Nisha explained how even in her family in India, men's rigid attitudes, their "mentality" were enabled by women. Her mother for instance, would

never let her father enter the kitchen and would even eat the leftovers while offering him fresh food. I understood the point that Nisha made here, that patriarchy is upheld by men and women alike. Yet, it was difficult to hear a younger Indian woman speak of the irrelevance of feminism. It also led to some introspection about my own complicity in cultural gender roles and norms. Had I not quit my better immigration status in Canada and aspirations to pursue doctoral studies in Toronto in order to be with my husband in the U.S.? Had I not lived for years in a small town with no visible prospects for my own career, even as his career grew steadily over the same years? So during each instance that I heard an endorsement of the patriarchal mindset or mentality, such as in Riya's and Gita's narratives, I had occasion to confront my own complicity in these systems and acknowledge that people assign meaning to their actions by drawing on common cultural codes accessible to them.

Chapter Summary

Patriarchal discourses, while being constructed through cultural processes, also operate as institutional discourses in the lives of their marginalized subjects. This institutional operation translated to an unequivocal interweaving of these powerful discourses in the lives and words of dependent immigrant women. Recalling Maya's words at the beginning of the chapter, there are a series of intersecting factors that keep the "H-4 lock" in place for dependent immigrant women. They are produced as gendered and educated subjects "sitting at home" by a combination of state-imposed regulation and neoliberal calculations of them as immigrant subjects. But these macro discourses also gain power by intertextually seeping into their everyday narratives.

State-sanctioned and market-enabled uncertainty governs aspects of these immigrant women's lives so as to compound their dependent status. Then, uncertainty combined with neoliberal conceptions of education make the pursuit of educational pathways difficult, if not impossible. Lastly, familial and cultural gender norms seal their dependent subjection. Yet, dependent immigrant women are not passive subjects who accept subjection discourses entirely uncritically. Their compliance to subjection by the state-market-familial apparatus occurs alongside an equal measure of self-making. The next chapter deals with some of the discursive strategies they deploy in order to negotiate *educated* subjectivities for themselves. They are primarily active in re-shaping their subjection through a distinctly "productive" subjectivity, largely predicated on leveraging their *educated* selves.

Chapter 6: *Educated Subjectivities*

Besides recycling powerful discourses in their narratives, participants would also counter and appropriate their discursive construction as “educated dependents.” This chapter discusses how this appropriation involved a process of “identifying and questioning institutional discourses that were influencing and/or shaping their narratives” (Souto-Manning, 2014, p. 173). In other words, narratives showed evidence of an awareness of the multiple subjection discourses identified in the previous chapter. Significantly, this involved narrative self-positioning that was predicated on being *educated*. This offered room to leverage subject positions within dominant and patriarchal narratives which produced participants uniquely as dependent gendered subjects, as noted in the previous chapter. Below, I discuss how these *educated* subjectivities were particularly evident in the professional persona, translocal subjectivity, alternate conceptions of education, and the dyad of support-sacrifice.

Professional, Productive Subjects

A difficult task during fieldwork was to find an hour of participants’ time for interviews or, in case of home visits, days when they were relatively free to entertain a “guest” at home. I had not anticipated the sheer amount of juggling of schedules this would entail, especially after I had made a three-hour trip to Atlanta. Often, skype interviews were just as difficult to schedule. At first, reading countless Whatsapp messages of unavailable days and time, I chalked this to reluctance on the part of apprehensive participants to sit down and be interviewed. But, as the study progressed, and our relationships and familiarity grew, I understood that the lack of time was

genuine. Between actively searching for jobs or educational pathways, volunteering and raising children, participants had little time to sit down for a chat. I was struck too by the extent to which the activities that currently occupied them were built around their former education and training. Unlike the construct of “sitting at home” that marked them as dependents, the *educated* selves that they defined and made use of, enabled a specific form of productive subjectivity.

“What do I do?” A professional persona was particularly discernable in Nisha’s case. From our first meeting at a temple event, I noticed how Nisha always maintained a careful, professional demeanor – her attire was well-thought out, be it Indian or western, and she always had a polite and precise way of speaking. She chose to speak with me in English, though I had informed her that we had a common mother-tongue, Telugu. In fact, I had heard Nisha speak in Telugu with her husband, mother-in-law and other family. To comprehend her preference for English in non-familial communication, it is important to contextualize it: many urban middle-class Indians, particularly the younger generation, prefer using English for both work and social relations in order to signal an urban and professional identity.

During our first interview, Nisha narrated what had kept her busy ever since she and Akash had moved to the U.S. She had worked at her software job in Bangalore till the eve of her departure. So once here, she had welcomed a few months’ break. Their plan had been that she would apply for a H-1B visa, which she did when it was time for applications. However, she was not selected for the H-1B lottery:

When I first didn't get the H-1B, the immediate thought was I will apply again.

I'm not one among those who gives up easily. I decided to apply again next year but in this one year what will I do? Six months I didn't do anything and I *knew* I didn't do anything. I wanted it to be like that because after college and work in India, I wanted a gap here so that I could work again after that. I knew what I was doing. I never repented that. So when I didn't get the H-1B, my only concern was what will I do this one year till I apply again. I looked at various options for studies from October to December. It was holiday time and we went on a vacation. Again you are back and thinking what to do. Meantime I had started volunteering. I also started posting on freelancing.com for web designing. Just started exploring more options and working on how to improve my skills and get in touch with technology. And then next year H-1 process had to be started. Again this year I knew when I didn't get it by end of June because I was familiar with the system. So I started looking for other options. I started this kids' summer camp. I applied back in Bangalore also for a job. In July, my husband planned for his mom and my parents to visit. So now that they are here, I have to be here at least till they are here. After that I will again get serious with job hunting in Bangalore. Maybe I will visit India for two to three months by the end of this year so I can look for a job while staying there or may be set up my accessories retail website. For the legal things I have to be there. So somehow by the end of this year, I will go there and do it. (Nisha, July 2015)

As we sat in Perimeter Mall not far from a noisy food court for this first interview, I remember how Nisha had explained everything she had been doing with animated gestures and a determined, focused look in her eyes. The two cups of frozen yogurt we had bought melted on the table by the recorder. I had to stop the recording so she could eat. Previously, Nisha had told me that she was frustrated with her experience thus far on the H-4 and was ready “to step up and speak to the government” if need be. After the first interview, I understood what she had meant by her remark. She had clearly done all she could do so as to not be “sitting at home.”

Nisha’s narrative gives a month by month account of what had occupied her since her arrival a year and a half ago – filing a H-1B application, exploring master’s programs, volunteering for web design, a second H-1B application, summer camp for neighborhood kids, job search in Bangalore, a potential accessories website business in India. Even when she spoke of the first few months of non-productivity, Nisha related it to her former work experience, saying that it had been a conscious decision on her part to take a break from employment. Indeed, everything that had kept her busy since her arrival had to do with her former education and training as a software engineer or with her being *educated*. For instance, in the summer camp, she taught the children additional curriculum beyond their school grade levels. Thus, despite “sitting at home,” her former training and education gave her the ability to engage in a series of actions that were aimed at being productive. Even her earlier uncritical assessment of “having fun” while “sitting at home” is re-framed here as a deliberate and agentic action – “I knew what I was doing.”

A professional habitus. Similar to Nisha's summer camp, many dependent immigrant women are engaged in part-time informal employment, primarily through neighborhood networks. Common forms of this informal work include babysitting services and daily Indian meal catering services (to male techworkers in the area). I met some women in participants' neighborhoods who offered these babysitting or meal catering services. Unlike formal employment that is prohibited for H-4 visa holders, these services are not seen by them as breaking the law. A few dependent immigrants may also continue to work remotely for their former Indian employers. Again, as they are on an Indian payroll, this form of employment is not seen as violating immigration rules, though much of it remains debatable. For Tara, her decade-long work experience as an educational consultant in India, meant that she could negotiate favorable remote employment terms with her employer when she moved to Atlanta. Tara described how she had debated accepting the offer, since it was a legal gray area. Her employer had made her an offer to fly her to India and back, all-expense paid, once or twice a year.

I realized that my career is in my hands, how I make things work is up to me. So the reality for my company and me is that I'm here in the U.S. and I'm going to be here for a very long time. So if they want me, they have to do certain things to accommodate me. If they don't want me, I have to look for other options. So my husband told me we'll look for a H-1B sponsor for you here. I spoke to my boss about it. I said, I have not seen growth, what are your plans for me. I have nine years of experience. I need a leadership position. If you don't want me here, I understand, I am going my way. He said of course we need you in the company,

why don't you head servicing. It was great because it's an evolution from sales/marketing. Things worked out. He said I'll bring you to India twice a year. Now I feel better because I took charge of my life. I didn't sit whining saying oh my god I'm such a victim. I did that initially but then I said this is not going to work. (Tara, August 2015)

Tara was clearly passionate about her work. Over the duration of this study, she received two promotions for her exceptional work at the firm – first as head of a large sales team in India and then as vice-president, handling multiple teams across India. Her work day involved staying up nights to coordinate teams in India and working most mornings to speak with clients in the U.S. Tara's case was in itself a counter-point to the construct of "sitting at home." She depicts herself in her narrative as being clearly in charge of her career. She gave her employer an ultimatum which led to an offer of promotion. "Sitting at home" figures nowhere in her narrative except at the end in contrast to where she positioned herself. She effectively turns the tables on the "sit at home and enjoy" discourse by critiquing it ("didn't sit whining").

Much like Nisha, Tara too had a professional persona that I noticed from our first meeting. After much messaging, scheduling, cancelling and re-scheduling, we met at Madras Cafe, an Indian restaurant in the busy Decatur area of Atlanta, not far from where she lived in an apartment with her husband, Farhan, and their dog, Lola. We had decided to meet for lunch. The restaurant was located in a strip mall with a huge parking lot. Adjacent to and across the lot, there was ongoing construction of a large building. In addition to the restaurant, the mall had an Indo-Pak salon and a couple of other stores.

Tara's car pulled in shortly after I had arrived. She stepped out and the driver sped off immediately. I realized later that it was her Uber ride. Before I could go up to her, she messaged me to say that she was early and settled into a bench outside. I walked up to her and we said hello, glad we had finally met.

Inside, we settled into a booth. We got our plates from the buffet and sat down to chat. I showed her flyers that I had made for a possible meetup group of H-4 women in Atlanta (which eventually became a Facebook group). Tara pointed to the clipart of women hiking figures on the flyer and asked in a dismayed tone in Hindi, "What is this, what have you put here?" With the hiking clipart, I had intended to depict that the group could be an outdoor/fitness group as well. But Tara argued, if you are someone who sits at home all day, do you think you would step out and join a hiking group. She suggested instead that I say it would be a potluck or a group meet at a coffee shop. I understood the practicality of her suggestion to draw people to the group. But her suggestion also made clear that Tara sought to distance herself from what she saw as the "sitting at home" group.

At the same meeting, Tara spoke of how when she had first come to the U.S., the couple had to stay with Farhan's extended family, aunt and cousins. During that time, Tara cooked for everyone. She had wondered then as to what had become of "Tara Mehta," referring to herself in the third person. Tara explained that she was a well-known name in her field of work in India. Soon, the couple moved into their own apartment and maintained intermittent contact with Farhan's family in Atlanta. Again, that day, even before our meal had ended, Tara had called for a Uber ride which arrived shortly. She

excused herself saying that they were faster than usual. She said a warm but brusque goodbye, got into her Uber and sped off. I was left standing outside the restaurant waiting for my ride.

A professional habitus is difficult to un-assume once we assume it. With Nisha and Tara, years of working at their respective fields meant that they had assumed a professional persona that they now took with them wherever they went. Thus, from the first meeting or phone call, participants' professional habitus was evident in speech and demeanor – Nisha the software engineer, Tara the media person, Diya the highly efficient IT professional, Asha the architect and so on. One's education and professional training become part of one's body, gesture, habitus.

For those who had not worked previously too, there were professional and productive subjectivities available through their search for educational pathways. Both Maya and Lila were engaged in finding colleges and programs, preparing for GRE or TOEFL exams and mapping their future educational and career trajectories. Like them, nearly a year and a half ahead of beginning my doctoral program, I too had begun preparing for these graduate entrance exams. The test prep engaged me and gave me a sense of purpose. But the true salutary aspect of this period came with being able to answer something other than “nothing” when people asked me what I did all day “sitting at home”. At the time of being a dependent immigrant, seeking to fulfill my long-held dream of doctoral studies had given me a means to lay claim to a productive subjectivity.

The “job” of motherhood. A productive and professional subjectivity was evident too among mothers in the study. I noted a distinct sense of the “job” of

motherhood that was founded on them being *educated* middle-class mothers. For instance, throughout her interviews, Diya, a former IT professional and mother of two young boys, would maintain a professional tone. She would direct me to ask her clear questions and gave concise, pithy answers. Similarly, Asha, a former architect and mother of two young children, always stayed to the point. In both their interviews, I found a general sense of *busy-ness* that was not merely portrayed but was also a fact of their lives. Both said that continuing their jobs did not make sense to them, since they would have to pay all their earnings to daycare for their kids. Both had worked in the U.S. after moving here and before they had children. After her first child, Diya tried to continue working, but was not comfortable rushing to work while raising a toddler. Asha too quit her job when she found it difficult to commute to work after their first child (“mornings were too hectic”). But both also spoke of being lonely during the initial years in small towns. They cited having held jobs previously in India as the reason they felt lonely during their early years of migration. Asha described it as “doing nothing all day, just sitting at home.” For Diya and Asha working with their former employer or on a H-1B job here was a means to be “doing something” as opposed to nothing. It was a means to stay busy, which they were now with their current schedules – driving children around, volunteering at their schools, taking them to Marathi mother-tongue classes, among other things.

Yet another mother in the study, Gita, had moved from Mumbai in August 2015 with her children – one in middle school and the other in kindergarten. Gita explained to me why she could not pursue studies or do much else at the moment using this anecdote:

I am the kind of person who can do one thing hundred percent. My husband says why do you want to go learn or do things outside, enjoy your time. He knows me, I cannot concentrate on more than one thing. Also they all need me. My kids need my attention. Husband needs my attention. They all need me right now. They are dependent on me. They know I'm there and they go and do their jobs. My son told me the other day, you are the only one that takes care of me. So I said no, it's not just you. I take care of your father and sister also. It's my duty. My daughter asked, so what's our job. I said your job is to obey us, to study. What is father's job? To earn money for us, support us. Grandfather? His job is to advise us. They are there to advise us, they are there for us. She nodded but I don't know what she understood [*laughs*]. (Gita, November 2015)

More frequently than others, Gita's narratives reflected patriarchal cultural discourses on motherhood and marriage. Yet, this particular narrative, gave pause to this characterization and called to reassess how she narrated herself. Gita began her anecdote with a self-deprecating statement about her inability to multitask. Yet, mid-way through it, she claimed a central position in the narrative and in the household – the key figure on whom others depended, the enabler who made things happen. By the end of the anecdote, Gita had painted a clear picture of how everything in her story had a place, each character had a job or duty.

On one level, Gita's narrative paints a neoliberal patriarchal familial setup of a male-headed family, where everyone had a duty, read job. But it was also clear that she was aware that her role was pivotal in this setup. All family members "need" her

presence since her “job” enables the performance of their jobs. She had emphasized on other occasions as well that she alone had taken care of their children in India when her husband had been traveling on work for years. It was also her decision to move to the U.S., since she felt that it was important for the children to have their father more present in their lives. Gita’s family was certainly conservative and patriarchal, and she had admitted this in our first interview. Neither did her husband encourage her to study nor form an independent identity outside the family. Still, she asserted herself through the same processes that molded her as a devoted mother, daughter and dependent wife.

In effect, in the relative absence of their techworker partner (at times away from home all week or on-call when at home), participants who were mothers became the default lead parent. They volunteered regularly at their children’s schools, supervising science lab stations, shelving books in the library, copying worksheets for teachers, and operating cash registers at the school book fair. Diya explained her volunteering at her son’s school thus:

I volunteer for in-class reading groups, science labs. For me it’s important. I get to know who are his friends. It gives me a one-to-one experience to get to know his teachers and peers. My mommy has come to volunteer, that’s important too for him. Else I wouldn’t know where science lab is in the school. We get to learn the way they teach too. I do my research that way. (Diya, December 2015)

In other interviews as well, Diya used “research” and “R&D” frequently to denote her preparation for a forthcoming change, such as moving cities or a potential change in career. Here, she used “research” to suggest that volunteering at her son’s school helped

her become an informed, engaged mother. Indeed, Diya's approach to parenting her two sons was highly organized. During a visit to her home, she showed me how she kept watch on her younger son at a local Montessori school through the webcast of his classroom on the parents' portal. She commented that day about how her son was not doing the task of the hour but instead whiling away his time outside the play group. She would have a talk with him about it when he got home.

It was clear how this productive quality is assigned more to motherhood than fatherhood when Hari, the dependent husband in the study, described his volunteering efforts at his son's school. Unlike the others, Hari characterized his volunteering as "mostly out-of-class work" such as working in the school store or driving his son's classmates to and from school, rather than volunteering for in-class activities. Hari stated that if he needed to know how his son was doing, he would simply ask the teacher. Instead, it was his wife Veena who was more concerned about his son's grades. Veena had on numerous occasions met their son's teacher when his grades were not as good on a test. Thus, though Hari was quite engaged in his son's schooling, driving him to school and to various activities, his characterization of these activities placed them outside the realm of a "job," unlike for the mothers in the study.

While participants without children such as Nisha and Maya regarded volunteering as a pathway to future employment, Riya, Diya and Asha always considered volunteering to be an extension of being an informed parent. They said that such regular involvement in their children's schools, showed teachers that they were committed parents and this in turn ensured better attention for their children at school. As

knowledgeable mothers, they also spoke of their efforts to comply with the norms of the U.S. educational system. They cited how school websites with parent portals or emailing the teacher or volunteering for that matter, were all unfamiliar to them initially, but that they had learned to conform to the educational system here.

Projects. Like with volunteering, many in the study directed their time and energy to what they described as a “project.” These projects ranged from baking and selling pastries/cakes (Riya) to taking art classes (Lila and Asha) in order to make and sell paintings or jewelry, and creating a shopping website (Nisha). All consistently used the term “projects” to describe these activities, a term that linked them to the realm of IT work and productivity. Moreover, these “projects” were always conceived as profit-generating activities with detailed cost-to-product calculations. Thus, these projects became a means to enact a productive subjectivity. For instance, in describing her project for an accessories retail website in India, Nisha used IT terminology such as “frontend operations” and “back office” (Nisha, Oct 2015). She spoke of traveling to meet vendors, if the website project took off. Similarly, Lila maintained an elaborate logbook of the exact costs of her art projects and worked out potential income from sales. Riya, Nisha and Lila expressed constant worry about expenses on these projects, and the need to justify these expenses to their partners, but it was also oftentimes a self-driven need to be financially accountable.

At first glance, the productive-dependent subjectivity performed by participants seems to align with notions of the gendered neoliberal subject – constantly calculating their own market value and engaged in (re)productive labor. It goes without saying that

their productive and professional subjectivities do align with conceptions of the neoliberal subject. But it was during a group interview that it became clear how they saw this productive subjectivity. Riya, Nisha, Lila and Gita were present for the group interview which took place at Riya's home. We watched a public broadcasting news video about dependent immigrants, which was followed by a panel discussion where panelists (reporters and local representatives) mostly agreed that H-4 visa holders ought to have no expectation of work after migration as they were not the lead migrants. At the end of the video, Riya remarked that there was no special consideration being requested by dependent immigrants. They only ask that as immigrants already present here, they be given a fair chance at employment. Nisha echoed Riya's comment:

Nisha: That is absolutely right. We are here only because our husbands are here, we agree (Riya: Correct!). But that doesn't mean you take H-4s for granted. I agree with what they said in the video about unemployment here, any country will first think about the welfare of their own country. But then, why are they bringing new people from India, that's what they shouldn't do (Riya: Exactly!). People in India can get good jobs there. Instead, a person comes here and then is denied an opportunity to work.

Riya: When you give a H-1B visa, you are also giving a H-4. You are giving a family the visa. (Group interview, December 2015)

Riya and Nisha located their potential productivity in competition with newer immigrants from India, those coming here on new H-1Bs, rather than with native job seekers. Their productivity was also contiguous to that of their techworker partners – the H-1B brings a

productive family here, not just an unattached individual worker. In effect, by placing themselves in competition with newer immigrant workers rather than with unemployed locals, Riya and Nisha shift their productive selves into the realm of international labor arbitrage and denounce a purely social policy-dependent mode.

In order to overcome the broad sweeping brush of “typefaction” (Behar, 1995), there is an important caveat to better understand gendered neoliberal subjectivities – that they be seen in the context of their articulation, as agentic actors in this instance. In other words, for dependent immigrant women, their productive subjectivities offer a way to negotiate the larger forces that shape them as dependents. Even when subjected to the construct of “sitting at home,” their productive subjectivity offers them leverage, room to express their value in the neoliberal patriarchal production and maintenance of flexible global labor.

Translocal Subjectivities

To hedge against the governmentality of work and visa precarity, participants and their families identified with a translocal way of being and belonging. For this, they would emphasize the multiple localities that they culturally and socially inhabited simultaneously, be it the suburb in Atlanta, the one in India or elsewhere in the U.S. or the world, where they had previously lived. These localities were not isolated or discrete units but overlapping spaces and always in transaction with other scales of being and belonging – national and global. Translocal subjectivities were evident in participants’ assessment of risk/privilege, investments in “home,” negotiation of visa procedures, and in specific conceptions of their children’s education.

Risk/privilege. Since I lived outside of Atlanta, I was concerned about where I would stay during my visits to the city, lasting three days to a week at a time. So Riya generously offered to host me during all these visits to Atlanta. Arun was at work in Minneapolis during the week and this would give her enough time to take me to visit some of her friends as well. At first, I assumed that Arun's trips out of Atlanta were temporary. But Riya explained that Arun's job as a consultant required that he stay at a hotel in the project location (different U.S. cities depending on the project) along with a few other teammates. So he would work "on-site" from Monday to Thursday. Late on Thursday evenings, he would fly back to Atlanta and work from home (or stay "on-call") on Fridays and, as Riya remarked, for most of the weekend as well. This was a common living arrangement for families of techworkers who were consultants.

As neoliberal high-tech labor, H-1B workers manage numerous tradeoffs in the flexible labor market. The consultant techworker tends to earn higher income and moves from project to project in different locations. But this also means that his family would have to move with him every year or sooner, when the project is completed. Many techworkers seek to become direct employees of U.S. companies, so as to have a secure work location and benefits. I asked Maya's husband, Krishna, and Nisha's husband, Akash, about this insecurity at work and accompanying tradeoff. Both characterized the tradeoff as "risk" that one assumes to engage in a highly competitive global labor market. Interestingly, however, when I posed the same question about work insecurity to their wives, I heard answers that were built around the notion of "privilege." Risk and

privilege thus appeared to be gendered iterations of the precarity of flexible neoliberal tech labor.

In their narratives, this sense of privilege was grounded in a translocal subjectivity. Physical, embodied presence in multiple locations is highly valued by transmigrants, yet widely discounted in studies on global migration (Conradson and McKay, 2007). Physical presence enables transmigrants to maintain social relations and a deeper sense of belonging at multiple locations. Lila, for instance, underscored her gain in translocal status during a visit to India for her sister's wedding. Her extended family including uncles and cousins, who had not supported her before her marriage and migration to the U.S., were now in need of money:

They didn't have money for their son's college fees. So they asked me if I could get some from my husband. It was my sister's wedding and there was everyone present there. I told them, I said I have about two lakh rupees right now in my account. I can do a single withdrawal and give you what you need. Just let me know. (Lila, November 2015)

Lila described this event as retribution for her extended family's lack of support when she had herself been in need of money for her vocational program in India. She felt that after marriage and migration, she had gained in financial status. She felt privileged to be able to demonstrate this gain in status by being present at her sister's wedding and offering a loan to her family.

Yet another form of translocal privilege, cited and practiced by participants, was through travel in the U.S. and/or around the world. When Nisha's parents and mother-in-

law visited her in Atlanta, she organized a month-long trip to various U.S. cities and national parks. When I asked Nisha about these travel plans, she stated that she always used her network of friends and family to travel, be it in India or the U.S. She had organized these trips without Akash's help and planned her guests' itinerary on her own. When she returned from each of these trips, she circulated her travel pictures on her social media pages for weeks. Like Nisha, Gita was also passionate about travel and she too was consistent with updating her Whatsapp profile pictures with images of family trips. Many of these photos showed her in a scenic setting and at times, with Shri and the children. In effect, social media venues are powerful tools for self-representation. The issues we post about on these pages become a means of self positioning. Nisha, Gita, Riya and Tara used social media platforms to dictate how they were seen in their family and social networks, despite and beyond their dependent status. Travel pictures in particular gave them a way to control their narrative as translocal subjects with privilege and helped allay their purely "dependent" subjectivity.

Investing in "home." In order to negotiate their precarious status as immigrants, participants and their families would invest, both emotionally and professionally, in specific locations in India. Emotional investments in India were affirmed through social media and daily calls to family there. Riya spoke twice daily to her mother in Pune and her sister in Mumbai. Nisha often referred to how Akash's current position would allow him to get back to a job in Bangalore, if the need arose. She too had obtained a certification to update her skills for a potential move back to Bangalore. Similarly, Tara

was professionally invested in a career in India and also spoke frequently of how her day passed in Atlanta with phone calls to India:

Sometimes I feel like I'm still living in India. Everything about my life is India except the location. I work on Indian time zone. Everybody at my firm is Indian though some clients are here. The need to go out in Atlanta just isn't there in me. I feel like there's Decatur and then there's Pune because that's where my work is. For our home in Pune, I even ask my mom to change the curtains, or tell her to get the kitchen painted. It's the same with friends. One of my friends in India is getting married and I'm helping her plan her wedding from here. The wedding will be in Goa and I have contacts in Goa, so I can arrange the details. I think, wow, from here I'm able to plan her wedding! But it's not a visa-dependent thing, anyone can do it. So for me, while I'm here, it still feels surreal. It feels like I'm not here because I'm not connected to the people or the city here. I feel very detached from the space around me. (Tara, March 2016)

Tara said this during a rare visit when we were out of her apartment for lunch. Even with Atlanta and its traffic all around her, she made these comments about not "being there." But her "surreal" connection to the city is offset by her intense and daily connections with people and places in India. Tara remarks as well about how she sees her location – between Decatur, the Atlanta suburb where she lived, and her hometown in India. In effect, she lived in Pune while being located in Decatur.

Like Tara's requests to her mother about changing home décor, translocal material investments served to ease work/visa uncertainty for other participants as well. Gita, for instance, coordinated with her father in Mumbai to rent out their old house:

My father takes care of everything there now. We have a house there. Just today I received a message from him that from tomorrow there will be a tenant there. We are sitting right here, me and my husband, and my father is taking care of our property there [*laughs*]! He had advertised in the newspaper. A Bengali lady, a manager, she asked to rent the place. She wanted my father to paint our house then get a few things done and she wanted a clean house. My father did all those things so we can earn something from that [*smiles*]. When we go to India, we can stay in father's house. I will also use that time to decorate our new house because we didn't get time to do anything when we left. I'm telling you, I'm sitting here, my husband is also sitting here, but all our work is taken care there by my father [*laughs*]! (Gita, September 2015)

Gita's relief and pride are apparent throughout this narrative. Her daily phone conversations with her father involved discussions about managing this rental property. She emphasizes too that both her husband and she have gained from this arrangement. So, her emotional/material investment in a home in Mumbai counters her partner's construction of her sitting at home. Like Gita, others such as Riya and Mili too made physical and emotional investment in "home" here, while simultaneously managing property in India – an apartment they had bought before they left, or a home they had lived in before their move to the U.S. Often, too, they were involved in the construction

of this property – designing the space, selecting wood for the cabinets, choosing tiles that fit each room. Like in Gita’s case, they did this over the phone with a family member or by exchanging pictures on Whatsapp.

Social media also plays a role in maintaining translocal social connections, independent of techworker partners. This was particularly meaningful for someone like Tara, who described herself as a “social butterfly” and felt that, despite her telecommuting job, she was isolated “365 days for 12 hours a day.” So Tara held regular skype video calls with friends who had dispersed after college. She also spoke regularly with her mother and sister. Moreover, social media offered her a space to speak about the issues she cared about, post pictures of her latest travels and of her life in the U.S. – the food she cooked, the festivals she celebrated or to express her opinions about Indian and U.S. politics. Similarly, for the “projects” that they were engaged in, Lila, Asha and Riya, among others had separate social media pages, where they posted and promoted their latest creations. For Riya in particular, these spaces allowed her to express her passion for photography. She was part of an exclusive photography group which held regular photo contests. Riya called these her “daily challenges.” She found that this online community taught her much about photography and nourished her interest on a daily basis.

Festivals. Almost every Atlanta suburb where participants lived, had its own temple, Indian grocery store and community spaces. While these diasporic spaces are vital to all Indian immigrants in the city, for dependent immigrant women, they hold particular meaning. They enabled a mode of translocal belonging through the recreation of festivals at home and in community networks. For religious festivals, many women in

the group bought merchandise at a local Indian grocery in their suburb. These goods enabled the recreation of festive spaces at home, which in turn contributed to the material and affective recreation of festivities similar to those in their hometowns.

In one instance, during the Hindu festival of Diwali, Lila, received an invite from a neighbor. The neighbor had to host a cultural session in her son's first grade classroom. She suggested that Lila give a talk about Diwali in the class, while she took care of Diwali food for the class. So Lila dressed in a festive *sari* for the day and visited the classroom. Later that day, she told me how speaking impromptu about Diwali had given her more confidence. Again, that evening, Lila hosted guests from Siva's work at their apartment. She decorated the apartment with candles and string lights. At the end of the evening, she addressed everyone and thanked them for helping her re-create the festive spirit and the same "feeling" as in India. All that day on social media, Lila's family had forwarded a video of her school talk and pictures of the evening at their apartment. This in turn garnered praise for Lila from her family. Indeed, like for Lila, virtual spaces enabled the enactment of translocal belonging for others as well. During Indian festivals, Riya, Gita, Diya and Asha would post pictures of festival greetings or of the festival food they had prepared. At the same time, during Halloween and Christmas, they also had pictures of their children in costume or of the Christmas tree at home.

Alternate Conceptions of Education

Narratives in the study frequently upheld alternate conceptions of what it meant to be *educated*. Ways of enacting an *educated* subjectivity took place through an appropriation and an opening up of the meaning of education, unlike one that was purely

based on neoliberal logic. These alternate conceptions opened up the meaning of education to include familial/social relationships, migration as knowledge, and values-based knowledge that mothers sought to pass to their children.

Family and education. In contrast to a purely skills-based perspective on schooling and education, narratives about previous education and training were regularly interwoven with those of familial and social lives. Parallel to descriptions of early schooling, I would hear about active social lives in and out of school. Indeed, family relationships were built around and said to deepen as a result of the attention given to schooling. Lila vividly described the interwoven fabric of her family and school life:

There was a lot of arguing in the extended family about us two sisters going to a matric [*private English-medium school*]. They asked my mother, why are you sending them to matric, we are better off than you and we only send our kids to public schools. But my mother told them, even if we don't have much, my husband wanted them to become big people by studying, so they will continue there. My uncles weren't well-educated and didn't understand this. There's a saying in Tamil, one who is from a house with nothing will study, one who is from a house with everything will not. That's the reason my uncles didn't study.

(Lila, November 2015)

While in other instances Lila had simply rued the fact that her extended family always made efforts to impede her educational aspirations, here she assumes a more agentic subjectivity. Her narrative establishes her and her sister's schooling as being central to familial relations. Her parents gave their education much importance, since it promised to

eventually lead to a gain in familial social status (“big people” referring to social standing). Also, Lila affirms her relative difference here with regard to dominant, male family members, her uncles, who were not as educated as her. She does this, interestingly, not by listing her relative educational achievements in comparison to theirs, but by turning to Tamil proverbial wisdom. Thus, she draws on the strength of their common knowledge source, where she establishes her superiority to the naysayers in her family.

Growing up, my brother and I, like Lila and her sister, and countless other middle-class schoolmates, were constantly told, study, all you need to do is study. Our parents missed family weddings and events saying the children have exams, they have to study. Our nuclear family and all its resources were devoted to my brother and I studying without distractions. My questioning of what it meant to be *educated* began about then. I did study stoically at one of the two desks in our living room. And I was aware of my relative privilege, compared to the aunts who could not, and countless kids we saw in our city, working and walking in the streets, while we trudged purposefully to school, our book bags weighing down our backs. But I also wondered then, had I not learnt just as much about life outside school? My parents rarely acknowledged such learning. Study they said, all you have to do is study, and your life will be settled. There were role models too – distant aunts, cousins to my parents, who were *educated*. They had jobs, equally *educated* partners, and always lived abroad. I wondered if being *educated* like them would protect me from the plight of my under-educated aunts, who, in contrast, had turbulent and highly dependent domestic lives. However, my belief in the meta-narrative

of education was always tinged with the skepticism that comes from daily negotiations with patriarchy.

Migration as knowledge. In India, when Nisha wanted to pursue a master's program in the U.S., her parents had suggested that she could do so if she married a groom working in the U.S. Nisha understood that they were reluctant to send her alone, but she also rationalized that marriage and migration could be a step towards achieving her educational goals. Similarly, when Lila's wedding was arranged, her in-laws promised to support her further education in the U.S. Since Lila had a vocational degree but aimed to study further, her mother had initially refused Siva's alliance. But, when Siva's family appeared supportive of Lila's future study plans, Lila and her mother had little to object. In this manner, marriage and migration were framed as educational pathways by those who had considered further education before marriage such as Nisha, Lila and Maya.

During one of our interviews, I asked Lila about her regrets with regard to migration on the H-4 visa. I asked her if she wished that she had stayed back in India and completed a bachelor's degree, while her husband worked here. Lila answered thoughtfully:

If you see on the H-4 visa, we have a lot of ambition, a lot of thoughts. But once we come to the U.S., it feels like someone tied up our thoughts. We can't do anything freely. Even if we go out of our houses, we cannot do anything. Recently I learned something here. In Virginia for a driver's license, a H-4 visa is sufficient. But here in Georgia, we have to apply for a social security card and

they give us a denial letter. We have to take that denial letter and only then can we get a driver's license. If I have to go to college here, I must know to drive. So I got my learner's license in Virginia. In Atlanta, I had to renew my license. That's when they asked me for a denial letter. So everyday we feel like we learn something new. There are friends who have been here for four years or seven years. When they say something I, how do I say this, I pay close attention and gain knowledge. And I ask myself, life can be like this too. So life is *very* interesting here. Though our ambition is tied up, the things we learn other than that are *very* interesting. In India we cannot *feel* this as much. (Lila, October 2015)

Lila began by expressing her frustration at being unable to pursue a bachelor's degree after migration. Despite all her efforts, she could not find a pathway to begin an undergraduate program here. She defines this state as a form of paralysis, as a tying up of her thoughts and an inability to do anything outside the domestic realm. However, she immediately counters this state of stasis through a narrative about learning something new through migration and re-location. She frames the denial letter procedure as learning through migration. This framing counters the marginal position assigned to her by the governmentality of this procedure. Through this experience, Lila also reclaims a form of knowledge outside the formal institutional learning that is currently out of her reach. As an immigrant subject, she is agentic in learning new things about life here, as compared to her life back home. When she began her answer, Lila's demeanor was quiet, thoughtful. As she described the "denial letter," she was animated, keen on sharing this

new piece of knowledge that she felt I should be aware of too. In the process, she linked her migration to an enriched life. It is vital to note here that she chose to frame this enrichment as learning and used a specific Tamil term that she consciously chose for her new knowledge (*grahichitu*). The term is from the spiritual realm, and refers to a context where wisdom is received and leads to awakening. Lila expressed in her narrative something that resonated with me as well. Migration is also learning of another form which teaches by lived experience.

Passing their values. For Riya, Gita and Diya, besides formal education for their children, it was important to pass certain cultural and ethical values to them. At times, they would even prioritize this form of learning over formal education. In diasporic spaces, dress code and modes of movement and behavior signal cultural belonging. I had noted that many participants took great care in what they chose to wear to temple events. But, most also sought to pass their cultural knowledge of the rituals, modes of moving, being and behaving in these religious and community spaces to their children. Hence, many younger children among participant families were enrolled in mother-tongue classes at Indian community centers in Atlanta.

With regard to formal education too, there was a desire to ensure that children's education was attentive to the multiple localities where they claimed belonging. When she moved from India, Gita had brought along textbooks used at her children's former schools in Thane. Over Christmas holidays, she insisted that the children work on these books. The family was as yet unsure if their son would pursue the critical pre-college years (11th and 12th grades) in India or in the U.S. So Gita wanted to keep the children

abreast of coursework that they would have completed in Thane, had they continued their schooling there. She told me how her son, Ayush, often spoke of “returning to Lokapuram school” in two years. Lokapuram was the neighborhood in Thane where Ayush had previously studied. Likewise, during their trip to India, Riya arranged for a summer internship for her daughter, Raaga, at a hospital in Mumbai.

At other times, true education was re-conceptualized and a need expressed to pass this knowledge to children. After watching a television interview of Malala, the Pakistani schoolgirl and icon for girls’ education, Riya commented on how it had made her reflect on what it meant to be *educated*:

Don't know where I stand right now. As of now, I'm not qualified for anything. My master's has no value right now. But I know education is never lost. What I know, I try to pass to my kids. If I was uneducated, my kids wouldn't, what I mean is, education is also thoughts you know. Malala's interview moved me. She's so clear in her thoughts. I have also seen a lot of stupid educated people full of backward ideas. Education for me is not just studying. It's also your thoughts about so many things. It never goes waste though there is no output as in work, but you are always using education in other ways, say by passing it to your kids. It's not about right or wrong. It's about being truthful. Raaga sometimes says I'm not politically correct, but I tell her I have views, please don't put your views on me. I am teaching her to be true to herself. We've given our kids the freedom as parents to talk to us. My parents didn't stand for different view points. I'm sure my

kids don't tell me everything but hoping they do this with their kids too. (Riya, September 2015)

Like Lila did earlier, Riya too begins her narrative in the deficit. She evaluates where she stands right now in terms of further education, training and work. But, in the process, she moves to re-defining education itself. While she draws a distinction between formal education and her conception of being *educated*, she does not position them as contradictory. She notes the quality of being *educated* in an icon of girls' schooling, Malala. Riya further refines her idea of education citing her efforts at teaching her children to think clearly and be true to themselves. In order to arrive at her notion of education, she uses various definitional phrases ("education is also thoughts," "not just studying," "not about right or wrong," "it's about being truthful"). Indeed, by contrasting her parenting with that of her own parents, she reclaims this conception of education as her own. She also assigns inter-generational significance to this values-based knowledge: she expresses hope that her children adopt this new notion of education when they become parents.

Both Lila and Riya began with deficit narratives Yet, by the time they had framed their conception of education, they had surplus narratives of growing through knowledge and of passing this knowledge to future generations. These moments of recognition when their narratives upheld alternate conceptions of knowledge, offer evidence of critical questioning of a purely neoliberal educational rationale.

Support/Sacrifice

In negotiating rigid gender roles that drew on a patriarchal-cultural “mindset” or “mentality,” narratives evoked spousal/familial support in exchange for educational and career aspirations that had been abandoned in assuming a dependent subjectivity. This tradeoff was expressed as a constant weighing of options after migration, in view of their *educated* subjectivity.

While discussing her options for work or study, Gita gave the example of her friend in Atlanta. Gita’s friend had struggled to match her work schedule with her children’s schedules. Though she had been working at a school, her friend had to eventually quit her job. Gita’s explanation of her friend quitting employment called into question the familial support system for working women, while weighing it against women’s education and aspirations:

Actually it depends on the spouse, your partner also. If he wants to do some things but you are not that ambitious and don’t have an *extraordinary* educational background, then you will say, it’s ok, I can be at home, be cool and take care of my children, my house, my husband and that will be ok for me. That is the mindset actually. If you have an extraordinary educational background and *you* are very committed and your husband also supports you, and your children are also supportive [*smiles*], then you can do that. It will be easy for you. There are exceptions of course to everything. Without spouses who are supportive, still some women do it. Yes they *do* it on their own. (Gita, October 2015)

Gita begins by highlighting the pivotal role of the partner in supporting his wife working outside home. She then proceeds to critique the “mindset” among women to settle for traditional gender roles. Education and aspirations that are out of the ordinary realm could make a difference. But then again, there are a series of conditions that enable this *educated* gendered subject to continue working outside home. These conditions involve the subject’s own commitment, her husband’s support and her children’s support. If Gita had ended her explanation there, it would have in some ways reinforced the power of male familial support in order for women like herself to realize anything outside home. But then, she poses the exception to the rule – women who are employed without such support. Her emphasis on the action verb for this last subject (“they *do*”), poses them in contrast to those who settle for their lot or are “ok” with their condition.

Gita displays awareness here of her embeddedness in a hierarchical, gendered and cultural system. This created room for her to leverage her position as a stay-at-home mother and wife within this system when she argues that ambition and qualifications on a woman’s part had to be met with support from her husband and also her children. Her worldview also affirms that higher levels of education can lay claims to greater familial support. In other words, the sacrifice of education and ambition is directly proportional to the support that women can claim in their families.

At times, the tradeoff in terms of sacrifice-support was even more clearly spelled out. Before their decision to migrate to the U.S., Nisha and Akash had planned and considered their options on a spreadsheet. Both had to repay loans and sought to assess the best scenario ahead for them. Nisha described how the couple had weighed their

options about their move to the U.S. She concluded that their current scenario involved “sacrifice” that she alone had to assume in order to achieve their common goals:

When I had to give my notice at work, there were a lot of things going through my mind. There was a lot of confusion, a lot of discussion with Akash. My company manager in Bangalore gave me an option. I will give you six months’ break, he said, go visit Akash in the U.S. and come back to work. Akash and I had an Excel sheet where we looked at these options. If I leave the job in India and he works in the U.S., what savings can we make? What if both of us work in the U.S., then what are our savings? We worked through multiple scenarios. Finally, we saw that even compared to both of us working in India, he alone made twice the pay in the U.S. We were thinking about our quality of life too. So I thought, ok this is the best scenario. Someone has to sacrifice and if it has to be me, then I will do it. But even when I decided to take up the sacrifice, I still thought I could get an IT job here. In six or seven months I could also start working. (Nisha, July 2015)

Throughout her narrative, Nisha places Akash and herself as equals making a joint decision about their future. Her good standing at work meant that she had an option to visit Akash in the U.S. and still get back to work in India. Together, Nisha and Akash (“we”) are active subjects who looked at options and considered different scenarios. But then, it was Nisha as sole agent who ultimately resolved their dilemma. She decided to “do it” meaning to “take up the sacrifice” of trading in her work for their combined well-being. In fact, much like Gita, Nisha does not conclude with this passive albeit agentic

subjecthood. She reclaims her career aspirations in the end, despite the tradeoff. While Nisha added later that the spreadsheet had been Akash's idea, as she frames it here, the spreadsheet gave a clear tally of the sacrifice involved on her part. The fact that she had given up other independent options more favorable to her, had added weight to the other side of the sacrifice/support dyad – she could call for greater support from Akash, given her sacrifice for their mutual benefit.

Nisha's narrative drew on the sacrifice that she had made prior to migration. But others also evoked their ongoing tradeoff as *educated-but-dependent* partners. Tara clearly spelled this out once:

There are days when you feel, is this what I want? Is this what I deserve? Days when you feel resentful towards your husband. We moved here because of you, *your* career comes first. Especially for a woman like me who is qualified, ambitious and doing well. Because of your career we moved here, what about my career. But then you kind of tell yourself, it was a decision you made, a choice you made. Nobody forced it on you. You knew what you signed up for. Then it's very important that the *husband* is very supportive. If the *husband* does not understand that at the end of the day he has to talk to the wife, give her some attention, ask her how was your day, though there was *nothing* that happened during the day. There are certain things that he needs to do to make it bearable. If my husband was *not* like that then ya, I would have a very tough time. (Tara, July 2015)

Tara begins her narrative as a self-doubting victim of her situation. By the middle, she assumes more control over her decision to migrate as a dependent. She does this first by positioning herself as an *educated* and ambitious woman who exercised a choice. This stance in turn calls for understanding and support from the partner, who did not make this choice, who did not sacrifice his career. She thus leverages her *educated* self to demand her partner's support. The nature of the support that Tara names here is also one that places the two partners on equal standing. By enquiring about the day that his dependent partner had, the husband accords equal value to her day. In itself, this attention counters the dismissive discourse on dependents who "sit at home" and assigns equal importance to their daily experience as that of their techworker partner.

Support and sacrifice are gendered codes of behavior in the setting of an Indian diasporic marriage. This became particularly evident in Hari's narratives. As a H-4 husband, he did not explicitly frame the sacrifice of his aspirations nor call for familial support in exchange, like the women did. Instead, his narratives repeatedly invoked his unconditional support for his wife's career despite his relative bad luck during the same period. For instance, he narrated how he had encouraged his wife to seek better work opportunities in a different Indian city at a time when their son was very young. Again, when his wife got her H-1B project before him, he supported her moving to the U.S. first, though it meant that he had to take care of their son in India. Sacrifice, in his case, was implicit in the spousal support actions that he took. But Hari too was able to call on familial support during the period that he was a H-4 immigrant. He described how his wife Veena was uncomfortable as the lead migrant in the family while he was a

dependent. For this, he repeatedly highlighted how uncertain her H-1B work had been, though precarity is the norm for all H-1B work. But Veena's reluctance in her role can be seen as support for Hari's ideal role as the breadwinner in the family. Again, when asked about his extended family's reaction in India to his H-4 status, Hari remarked, "They are worried but I have to give them hope." The family's concern for his temporary aspirational sacrifice becomes a mark of support, when he assumes the role of hope-giver as head of the family.

The support-sacrifice dyad, as present in these narratives, is the other side to the coin of a rigid gendered "mindset" and "mentality." In expressing the need for greater familial support, these narratives displayed awareness of gendered norms and leveraged participants' relative position in the household. Being gendered *educated* immigrant subjects was an important part of this leveraged position.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed moments of narrative appropriation of dependence discourses. This primarily took place through self-positioning as *educated* immigrant subjects. Neoliberal miscalculations of the gendered and dependent condition were re-assessed through productive and professional subjectivities. Further, the governmentality of precarity was allayed through translocal ways of being and belonging. Education was also re-conceptualized to encompass familial relationships, migration and inter-generational values. Lastly, the support/sacrifice dyad offered some evidence of critical awareness around cultural notions of rigid gender roles.

Chapter 7: Discussion

This study set out to understand gendered dependence within the context of neoliberal global labor arbitrage (Ong, 2006). The issue of dependent immigrant women was seen as situated at the intersection of the fields of gender, migration and education. Study data were analyzed so as to not lose sight of all three aspects of the issue. The study framework also drew on an understanding of dependent subjectivities as being made by a state-market-family apparatus, but also as self-making *educated* subjectivities within macro institutional and cultural discourses.

On the issue of gendered dependent migration, it would be easy to conclude that a modified feminine mystique operates in the lives of these diasporic middle-class women from India (Friedan, 1963/2001). Yet another feminist perspective would construe educated immigrant women being channeled into domestic labor via homemaking and motherhood, to benefit the transnational patriarchal familial and market system. This view would uphold that immigrant women's labor is diverted into re-productive labor as they become cogs in the wheel of a neoliberal patriarchal social and market system (Acker, 2004). But over the duration of the study, I found that these and other metanarratives were challenged repeatedly in participant narratives about their "situation," a word they used over and over. "Situation" underscored the importance of their individual, varied and complex contexts, as well as corresponding negotiations of their contextual constraints. Their stories about their condition and about their experiences were directed by them, even if they decried their lack of options while being "locked" into the condition of dependent migration.

Major Findings

The dialectical relationship between neoliberal subjection and participants' self-fashioning through their *educated* selves, was evident in the main themes of the study, as depicted in the table below:

Table 2: Subject-ification Processes

Dependent subjects		Educated subjectivities
"Sitting at home"	↔	Professional, productive subjects
The governmentality of precarity	↔	Translocal subjectivities
Neoliberal conceptions of education	↔	Alternate conceptions of education
"Mindset" and "mentality"	↔	Support/sacrifice

The overlap and mutual endorsement of state, market and familial patriarchal discourses were seen as producing gendered dependent immigrant subjects. Each dominant discourse sanctions the other. First, through a "lock" on their market participation, the state and global market produce dependents as gendered subjects who are "sitting at home." Then, patriarchal familial and neoliberal calculations deem these subjects as unproductive, particularly in view of their former education. Participant narratives offered evidence of internalization of these constructs and periodic uncritical recycling of these discourses of non-productivity. At other times, they also showed evidence of

challenging and appropriating these constructs through productive subjectivities that drew primarily on their *educated* selves. Testimony to this productive self was the flurry of activity that dependent immigrant women undertook after migration. They would also assume a professional habitus, similarly anchored on their previous education and training. In fact, motherhood was also re-conceptualized as a vital “job” without which the life of the family would come to a standstill.

The study also found that neoliberal governmentality operates in the lives of techworkers and their families through the precarity of work and immigration status. Documents play a pivotal role in producing and maintaining these precarious conditions. One such document is the “denial letter” to obtain a driver’s license. Through this document, dependent immigrant women are reminded of their marginal immigration status. Moreover, short-term project-based work conditions for techworkers make it difficult for dependent immigrants to pursue formal higher educational goals. However, again, they manage to appropriate some of this work and immigration precarity through enacting translocal subjectivities. To this end, they hedge the risk of participating in the neoliberal global tech market through material and emotional investments in multiple locations. Hence, participants placed a premium on physical presence in the U.S., as well as their ability to be present at familial events in India, and to re-create religious festivals socially and culturally in Atlanta.

The tension between macro neoliberal discourses and subjective appropriation of these discourses was particularly evident in participant narratives that were woven around education. As neoliberal subjects, dependent immigrant women may take a return-on-

investment approach to their educational aspirations and seek to justify the costs of education through potential market-based returns. But, since they are locked into non-engagement and non-productivity in the market, this rationale only leads to trivialization of their pursuit of education, as seen notably in Lila's case. In order to circumvent these neoliberal conceptions of education that exclude them, they reconceive the meaning of education in their and their children's lives. The sites of appropriation of an *educated* identity are family, migration and inter-generational values. Scholars have made an extensive case for such contextual re-definition of the meaning of education among immigrant communities and general learning communities as well (González, Moll & Amanti, 2006; Hall, 2002; Villenas, 2001). When placed in a restrictive immigration status, dependent immigrant women turn to these "funds of knowledge" (González, Moll & Amanti, 2006) to access other ways of positioning themselves as *educated* subjects. Significantly, knowledge and education was re-defined in the cultural and religious/spiritual realm, as seen in Lila's evocation of *grahichitu* to describe her learning experiences as an immigrant. Mothers in the study also expressed a concern to extend their children's learning beyond formal education to cultural and ethical knowledge that they sought to pass to them.

Lastly, rigid gender roles and norms figured unchallenged in narratives as "mindset" or "mentality," recycled patriarchal discourses that were framed as inevitable. Dependent immigrant women thus acknowledge the power these cultural and institutional discourses hold in their subjection process. At the same time, however, they know how to position their *educated* selves to garner greater familial support. This positioning is

gendered and draws on their equal standing in terms of education and career aspirations, as well as their relative “sacrifice” after migration.

In the dialectical processes of *being made* and *self-making*, the findings from this study demonstrate how an *educated* subjectivity can become *leverage* for dependent immigrant women. Through a close narrative analysis of data, the study went beyond the dismissal of the role of education in these women’s lives. It endeavored to deepen feminist understanding of women’s subjectivities, when they are embedded within overlapping patriarchal systems. The notion of *leverage* is useful here to understand how immigrant women may gain familial support through an *educated* subjectivity. A gendered *educated* subjectivity becomes *leverage* when marginalized gendered subjects participate in patriarchal systems use specific forms of self-positioning that allow them room to negotiate the subjection of the system. Dependent immigrant women recognize the injustice of the socio-economic systems where they are embedded (and participate). But they are surrounded by social and familial systems that would implode on them if they risked outright defiance of their subjection. In this context, they have recourse to their *educated* subjectivity as *leverage*, a space-making strategy, to enable an agentic positioning within oppressive systems of power. The study noted too that self-making for gendered subjects located in these systems, tends to alternate compliance and self-making processes. Self affirmation through an *educated* subjectivity was interwoven into the interpretations they gave of their experiences and their significance to the family and wider society.

In an analysis that draws parallels between the discourses entrenched in the Indian state's family planning policy and in U.S. immigration policy, Bhatt (2007) argues that both center on the celebration of the modern Indian family and a "new Indian woman," one who is as educated as her globally mobile high-skilled partner:

The new Indian woman is marked through her education, urban lifestyle and employment. She represents a modern Indian nationality that, on the surface, is not rooted in caste, linguistics, or region, yet does not succumb to Westernization. Most importantly she is also represented as a socially aware, diligently attentive mother of a small family. (p. 60)

Bhatt finds that it is this notion of the educated, family-oriented middle-class woman that is also at the center of family reunification immigration policy in the U.S., which enables large numbers of skilled workers from India to come here accompanied by their families. Yet, Bhatt argues, policy is silent on the non-working condition of H-4 immigrant women, even as they increasingly figure in statistics on domestic violence. It is this marginalization within an otherwise privileged immigrant community that gives rise to the various strategies of resistance detailed in the present study. Located within a "model minority" of immigrants, and celebrated as "the new Indian woman," dependent immigrant women are shaped and participate in self-making as productive, *educated* immigrant subjects. This gendered, educated, neoliberal self is at once the power that subjects them and their strategy for defining themselves when subject to this power.

“It All Depends on Me”

On various occasions during the study, participants would repeatedly affirm that the family’s decision to remain in the U.S. centered on whether they, the dependent immigrants, found fruitful ways to realize their aspirations. Even for those without such support from their techworker partners, like some mothers in the group, their central role in the household ensured their position as family decision-maker. This was affirmed by the domestic responsibility that fell to these mothers in the absence of an always overworked techworker husband. This in turn meant that they played a pivotal role in household decisions about children’s education, choice of neighborhood and schools.

The centrality of dependent immigrants in the individual techworker household is articulated in the social and political arena through the tireless political activism of this immigrant community towards gaining better rights for dependent immigrant women. More than a decade of such community activism led to the granting of a restricted number of work permits in November 2014. “It all depends on me” is therefore an affirmation that goes beyond the centrality of dependent immigrant women’s role in their individual households. It upholds as well their role in shaping macro forces such as immigration policy and the influx or return of vital tech labor. Therefore, it would be simplistic to overlook the effect of these immigrant women’s stories on macro forces, given that the global is always made up of the local, and the local of the global (Freeman, 2001).

Implications

Theoretical. This study sought to parse out the marginalization of immigrant women within the neoliberal global labor market. Too often, studies overlook neoliberal subjects who are merely seen as active participants in the global market. But the varied geography of neoliberal economic growth also produces subjects who deal with it through compliance, resistance, resilience, and most times, a combination of these strategies (Freeman, 2001; Katz, 2004; Ong, 2006). The study found that, as neoliberal subjects, middle-class immigrant techworkers and families subscribe to views of education as financial investment and aim for a productive identity. So, middle-class Indians, produced as neoliberal subjects in one educational and nation-state context, participate in the global market after migration. Yet, their displaced neoliberal subjectivity also frequently leans on and draws from cultural ideas of family, community and mutual help. This was evident in re-conceptions of education and in the sense of belonging and community that they sought locally and translocally. From the perspective of the neoliberal state, there is potential to consider the non-remunerative labor of dependent immigrant women in their families and communities as “relational labor” (Muehlbach, 2012). Their care labor is oriented towards others such as the techworkers and helps maintain the productivity of this imported labor force. However, unlike relational labor, care work among dependent immigrant women is not entirely voluntary but an orientation to which they are directed in view of their dependent visa status. From the individual dependent immigrant woman’s perspective, the co-existence of neoliberal notions with social relational values ought to be understood as her negotiation of location

within patriarchal-neoliberal systems. Such a nuanced approach to individuals located within neoliberal systems can overcome the common dismissal and broad brush used to characterize these subjects, which tends to overlook their everyday navigation of neoliberal systems (Lukose, 2009; Ong, 2006)

The study also contributes to anthropological literature on immigrant subjects and the place of education in the formation of gendered immigrant subjectivities (Datta et al., 2009; Hall, 2002; McDowell, 2008; North, 2013). The idea of *leverage* highlights the familial and social gains of being educated for middle-class immigrant women in contrast to the prevalence of the “de-skilling” paradigm in migration studies (Salaff, 2000; Suto, 2009). *Leverage* through an *educated* identity contributes to a greater understanding of what education does for gendered subjectivities in various contexts, besides participation in the neoliberal market (Jeffrey, Jeffery, & Jeffery, 2008). In the absence of neoliberal validation of their educated identity through employment and the market, these immigrant women seek other ways to express their *educated* selves. Consequently, being *educated* was connected to realms outside the formal institutional setting, such as to the lived experience of migration or to cultural/spiritual funds of knowledge. For instance, mothers in the study acknowledged the importance of cultural and ethical forms of education for their children. They saw themselves as conduits of this knowledge. In this sense, the study also aligns with educational research on conceptions of education or *educacion* among immigrant women (Durand, 2011; Olmedo, 2003; Tapia et al., 2016; Villenas, 2001). While these latter studies deal uniquely with notions of education among immigrant women with respect to their children, this study contributes to a greater

understanding of how immigrant women, including mothers, perceive their own *educated* identity.

In general, studies on the techworker community tend to focus on the flows of the global mechanism of labor arbitrage and immigration controls that enable these flows (Banerjee, 2006; Chakravartty, 2006). The assumption underlying this focus is that this is a temporary immigrant community. But, techworkers from India in particular primarily seek to stay on as immigrants in the U.S., despite their long road to a permanent status (Bhatt et al., 2010). Similarly, studies on dependent immigrant women in this community are centered around the issue of domestic violence, again considering this population as temporary visa holders rather than future immigrants. This study enables a dual shift in the study of the H-1B/H-4 population – first, that this is an immigrant community, and second that these are not unattached workers but families of immigrants who migrate through this visa system. Theoretically, this means a shift in the study of the experiences of these future immigrants, more in line with migration studies than with an approach centered on global flexible labor. Policy-wise too, understanding the techworker community as immigrants has some implications as discussed below.

Policy. Immigration policy that governs techworker immigrants has been skewed towards the interests of corporates and the market. Over the years, there has been little attention paid to the families of these techworkers. Indeed, techworkers are widely seen and represented as “labor” or “technobraceros” with globally transferable skills (Rudrappa, 2009). Thus, policy focus has remained on reform of the labor arbitrage system that procures these skilled workers for the country. This unilateral focus has

meant that families of these techworkers are overlooked in devising H-1B policy (Bhatt, 2007). Still, the fact remains that most techworkers, except the youngest, have families waiting to join them in the U.S. There is great need for a shift in policy thinking about the H-1B population as families rather than as purely skilled, unattached workers (Rudrappa, 2009). This study is a step in this direction to a better understanding of the familial conditions surrounding the importation of this skilled workforce. Such a shift would ensure attracting and retaining these immigrants, who are likely to otherwise return to India or migrate to other countries (Kapur, 2010).

Another necessary step towards policy reform would have to address the maze of documentation required of this immigrant population. These documents favor the maintenance of exploitative flexible labor conditions for techworkers, keeping them dependent on their employer while offering them little to no benefits (Bhatt, 2007). They also create precarious conditions of migration for the H-1B/H-4 population whereby long wait times for stamping and approval procedures suspend their lives for the duration of their temporary status. A simplification of these procedures would have to reconsider how techworkers are made vulnerable when tied to a single employer, who holds immense power in deciding the conditions of long-term migration of the techworker and his family to the U.S.

Specific to the population of dependent immigrant women, as noted by women in this study, educational scholarships and/or access to graduate assistantships would make higher education more attractive to them. This would offer them a means to justify expensive graduate education in the U.S. to their families. Furthermore, if they are

allowed to do this on the H-4 visa, it would overcome the additional step of converting to a student visa, a procedure requiring dependence on and financial support from their families.

Limitations

The study did not consider an important aspect of dependent migration and policy – that of activism on the part of the dependent immigrant community to obtain work permits. The interviews with Rashi Bhatnagar, the community activist, were also not directly relevant to the women's narratives, as Rashi's interviews mostly detailed various policy reform initiatives and the community's efforts to follow through on these. Since participants in the study were not actively engaged in these activist efforts, it was seen as a separate study with those who were engaged in such activism, either virtually or through community organizations.

A more comprehensive view of dependent migration could also be obtained by undertaking a multi-sited study between cities in India and the U.S. Many study participants spoke of a shift in their understanding of dependent migration from prior to migration. It would be fruitful to document these changes so as to better understand the Indian context and the social and familial pressures that it places on educated middle-class women to undertake dependent migration.

A comparative study of high-skilled spousal migration among different countries would also offer a more comprehensive picture of the operation of the global market and different states in the lives of this globally mobile population. These studies are presently

conducted within national contexts (González-Ferrer, 2011; Khoo, 2001; Man, 2004; Meares, 2010).

Lastly, the study lacked religious diversity within the context of the Indian techworker community since most participants and their families were Hindu. Though they are a minority, Muslim and Christian members of this community ought to be included in a more comprehensive study as they could offer different social and familial experiences of dependent migration. For instance, the presence of Hindu temples around Atlanta offers many dependent immigrant women a cultural resource that they can draw on. For Muslim and Christian Indian immigrants, such religious and cultural presence is on a much smaller scale. For Muslim techworkers and their families in particular, as dual minorities in India and in the U.S., visa regulations and precarity may likely be experienced as harsher and more discriminatory.

Future Research

Further research into dependent migration could consider the presence of these immigrant women in online communities. Much of the activist effort of this community is currently generated and come together in virtual and social media spaces. After careful consideration and in conformity with the ethics of mining online data, there could be some interesting findings about this immigrant group.

There is also scope to expand this study by following participants through their higher educational decisions, before and after they begin graduate studies in the U.S. For Maya, Nisha and Lila in this study, their higher educational goals were derailed, but there are cases of dependent immigrant women who change to a student visa and pursue

educational and work aspirations. Such a study would offer insights into the relationship between gender, migration and higher education.

Lastly, the issue of gender and techworkers is worthy of further exploration. This study found that the pressures of performance in the global market sooner or later lead to health issues among overworked techworkers, as was the case with many of the participant families. The lead migrants in these families faced a series of stress and health concerns. It would be useful to study how masculinity and performance are seen by techworkers as they negotiate familial and market expectations.

Conclusion

As I complete this dissertation, there is much apprehension in the techworker and Indian IT community about proposed changes to the H-1B visa system under the new U.S. administration. There is little clarity on these changes, which has meant shaky IT stocks in India and high-level talks between the two countries. There is also a chance that the work permits recently issued to dependent immigrants may be repealed as a result of these changes. Once again, techworkers and their families await their fate with bated breath.

Still, I wrap up this dissertation with hope and deep faith in the common story of migration. The study gave me the opportunity to witness the self-belief, strength and resilience of a small group of immigrant women and their families. While they were humbled by forces that at times appeared beyond their control, they also demonstrated awareness and ingenuity in navigating these forces in their lives.

Postscript

My conversations continue with the women who are a part of this study. They are eager to move on from our initial conversations about their dependent migration experiences. We discuss my impending relocation to Atlanta, their children, my pregnancy, their summer plans. But they also periodically update me about their apprehensions as they seek new pathways out of their current period of stasis. For most of them, the future is still uncertain as was evident with a new Presidential Executive Action in April 2017 called “Buy American, Hire American” that seeks to subject the H-1B visa program in particular to extra scrutiny and a stringent review process.

Among the focal participants, Riya was the only one who transitioned to a green card. Besides starting a fledgling baking business, Riya enrolled to be a substitute teacher at the local school district. However, as of our last conversation, she hesitated to answer the weekly calls for substitutes. She cited a lack of confidence that partly stemmed from seeing the other side of being a substitute – her daughter Alisha had given her detailed reports about how substitutes were all seen as inept at her school. In fact, Riya spoke of an experience when she had volunteered for Alisha’s Reading class and other students had later told her daughter that they followed little of what her mother had said during the class. Having experienced a similar depletion of confidence during my year as a dependent, I had little encouragement for Riya, except to say that the first step matters. Riya was hopeful too that she would take that first step some day soon and then not look back.

In early April, I got a message that Maya had just had a baby girl. Maya had stayed in intermittent contact after her move to California. I knew that she and Krishna were considering being parents before they left Georgia. Maya's in-laws were to come stay for a long visit and help the couple with their newborn.

Meanwhile, Nisha and Akash had decided to return to India as Akash's visa was set to expire and Nisha had not found an IT job for herself. The couple was also concerned about Akash's mother who lived alone and was in poor health. When Nisha called me in early spring, she expressed disappointment and worry whether she had done enough to secure a job in the U.S. Her initial confidence about finding a job again in Bangalore had also significantly depleted. She wondered if she could make her volunteer IT experience in an unrelated domain seem relevant. She characterized herself as no longer a fresh graduate but also lacking work experience to place her on par with her former colleagues in Bangalore.

Far from considering a return to India, Lila had increasingly embraced living long-term in the U.S. She now played a greater role in her extended family in India who most recently asked Lila to name her sister's baby, her nephew. Her husband Siva's influence was still strong on her educational and career aspirations. She spoke of completing various software-training and skills-updating modules that were required of Siva at his work. This helped her learn some software skills and she found herself drawn to study programming.

Also in spring 2017, soon after an update about the writing of the dissertation to all the participants, I got a message from Gita asking for suggestions of GRE and TOEFL

books. Gita had spoken at times of completing a short-term course here, but this was the first time she expressed interest in pursuing a graduate program. She had met a neighbor who had been a H-4 husband and was now pursuing a PhD program in Finance at the University of Georgia. He encouraged her to think about applying to a graduate program. Gita still could not get her husband Shri to support her further education. Shri believed that it was not her age to study and that they should focus on the children's education now. But Gita was hopeful that she would convince him if she found funding for her studies. She also informed me that the family would be moving to a new home that they were buying near Atlanta. Shri and Gita had decided that it was time to keep the children's schooling steady. Further, Shri's employer had agreed to help him start his green card process soon. Gita expressed hope that there would be more Indian immigrants as also more friends for the children at their new neighborhood.

Among the non-focal participants, Diya was considering applying for a work permit but hesitated as the reform about work permits was subject to an impending court ruling under the new administration. Tara continued her travel to India and remote work arrangement. Her husband Farhan's green card processing was underway and the couple had plans of buying and moving into a house from their Decatur apartment. Hari too had found some luck when his H-1B application was selected in the 2016 lottery. However, the application was subsequently held up in a secondary enquiry process that is not yet complete.

Since working on this issue, I have had the opportunity to present at various conferences and other venues. In the presence of policy concerns around the condition of

undocumented immigrants and refugees in this country, I have been asked, why should one care about these middle-class immigrants? Social scientific research tends to concentrate with good reason on the most marginalized subjects, given limited public resources. Yet, in the process of seeking out the most marginalized, as researchers, we tend to freeze our subjects in snapshots of victimization. Through this study, I learned that middle-class immigrant subjects, such as techworkers and their families, offer an ideal counterpoint to this approach. They prove that marginalization is a process that creates victims in frozen moments, but these subjects are also always actively participating and/or resisting this process of marginalization. Dependent immigrant women are aware of their relative privilege in relation to other immigrants and do not see themselves as competing for the same resources or policy attention as immigrants that are more in need of these resources. Still, it would be difficult to argue in favor of maintaining the status quo on dependent migration policy, saying it is less unjust than other policies on immigration.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

H-4 women from India in Atlanta Dissertation Study

Seeking participants
for my PhD research study
on H-4 and Education.

If you are a H-4 woman or were formerly on H4
from India, now living in/near Atlanta,
please contact below to know more.

Study involves:
Interviews on the topic of education and H-4
Group discussion on same topic
Participants' identity will be kept confidential to
encourage free discussions.

Non-remunerative
but a chance to voice your opinion
on this important topic! Hope to have a group
dinner and a local trip as well ☺

Thank you for your interest ☺

Bindu Timiri
Contact ph. & email

Appendix B: Interview Guide

- Which part of India are you originally from?
- Before coming to the U.S., could you describe your life in India?
Work, study, family, etc
- Could you describe your education in India?
- How did you decide to come to the U.S.?
- How long have you been here? Could you describe how you've experienced life here since you arrived?
- What do you think of the option to study on the H-4 status?
- Do you think you have changed since you have been on this status?
- Has your idea of being a woman changed?
- Are you planning to study soon? Why/why not?
- What has been your experience pursuing an education on the H-4/dependent status?
- What do family and friends say about your dependent status?
About your plans to study?
- What are your future plans?
- What does it mean for you to be educated? In India? In the U.S.?
- Do you visit Patel Plaza or Global Mall or any other Indian community areas? For what purpose, any examples?
- Have you been active in the Indian organizations in the city?

- Do you participate in online discussion forums about the H-4?

How do you use these forums? Did these forums help you meet people in Atlanta?

- What do you think of recent changes to allow EADs for certain H-4s?